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march/april 1998

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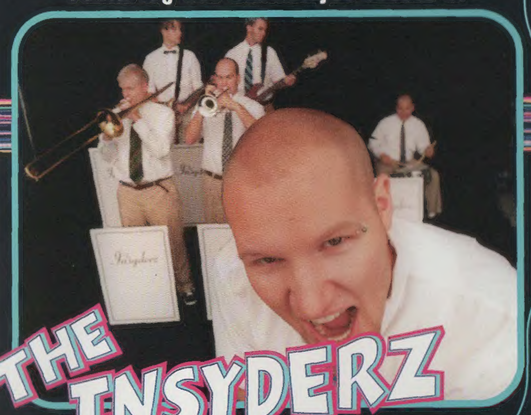

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March 17 - Boise, ID	April 1 - Springfield, IL	April 25 - Hillsboro, KS	May 9 - Bartlesville, OK
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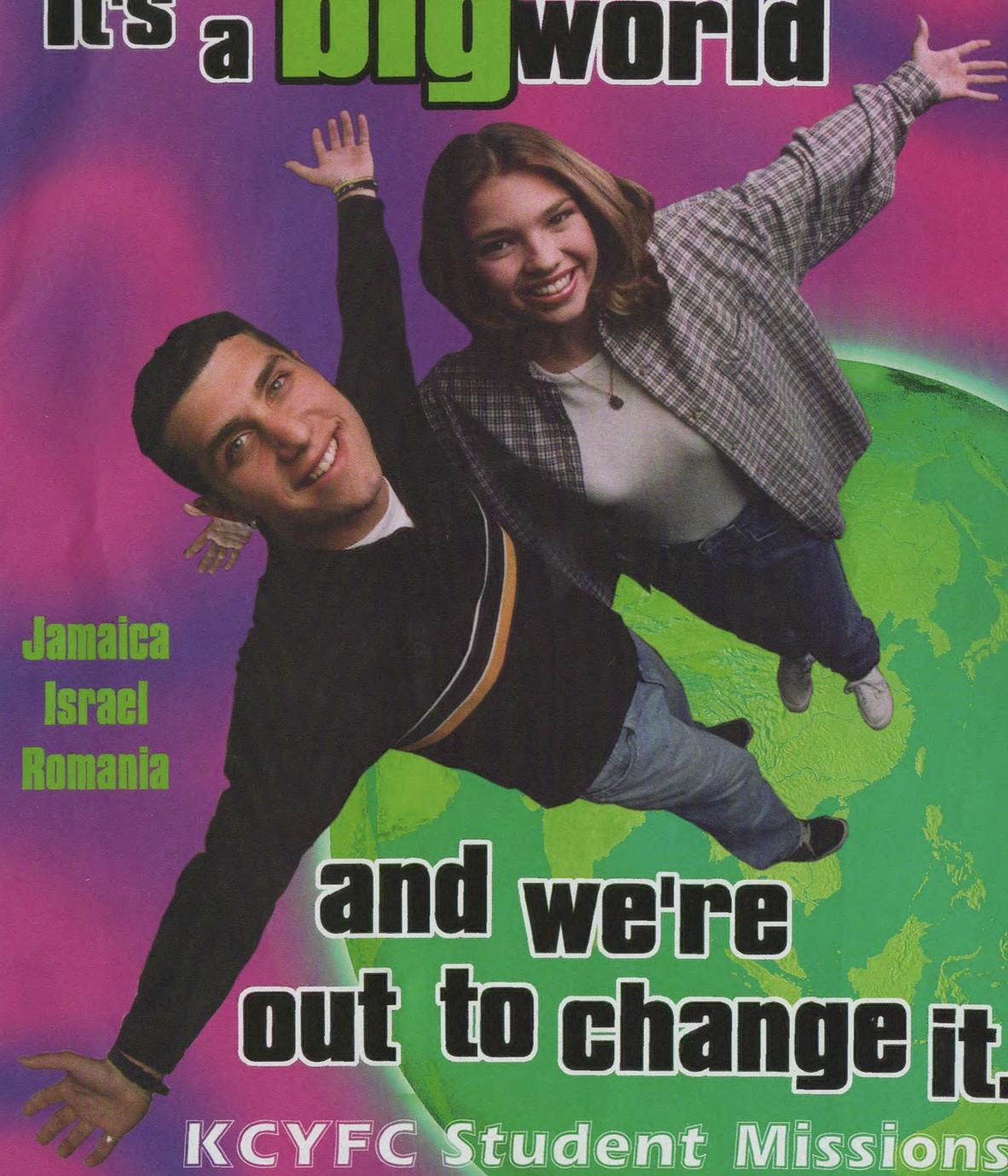

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7ball

march/april 1998

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the Altered

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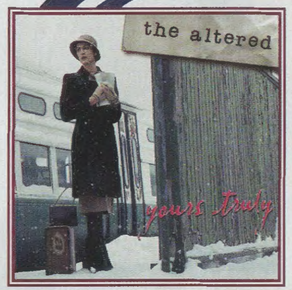

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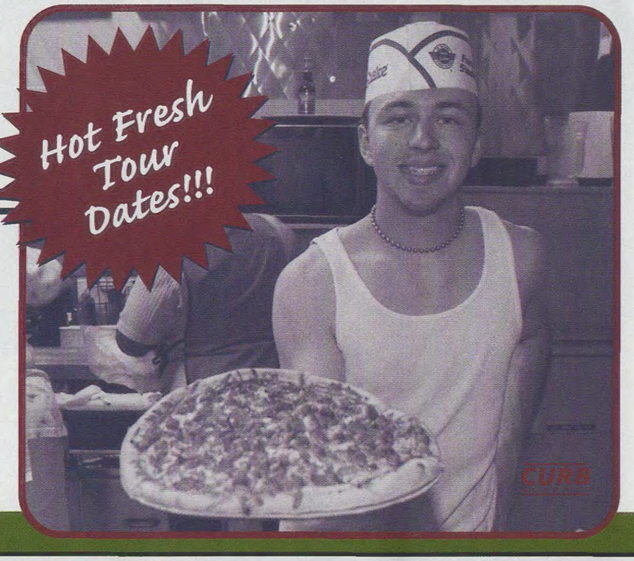

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ON TOUR WITH *BIG TENT REVIVAL* dates:

1/30,31 Springdale, AR - Springdale High School
2/5 Des Moines, IA - Cornerstone Family Church
2/6 Wichita Fall, TX - Wichita Falls Theatre
2/7 The Woodlands, TX - United Methodist Church
2/9 Colorado Springs, Co - New Life Church
2/10 Farmington, NM - Farmington Civic Center
2/12 San Jose, CA - The Koinonia Koffeehouse
2/13 Coos Bay, OR - Mansfield High School
2/14 Vancouver, WA - Glad Tidings Church
2/16 El Cajon, CA - Shadow Mt. Community Church
2/17 Chino, CA - Calvary Chapel
2/20 McKenzie, TN - Bethel College
2/21 Indianapolis, IN - Adams Mark Hotel
2/22 Archbold, OH - Evangelical Mennonite Church
2/26 Tuscaloosa, AL - First Baptist Church
3/7 Shawnee, OK - Oklahoma Baptist University

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"JOHN'S LAMENT" &
"OOH WHERE ARE YOU?"

We think your mag is really super! The interviews and photos are neat! Every other month we tear out the photos and hang them all over our rooms. We hope you start printing your awesome mag every month!

Lori Christalen
via the Internet

P.S. Please print this in your totally tubular mag: Evan Melton has a huge, excuse me, gigantic and humongous nose! Punks rawk!

[Sorry, but we couldn't possibly print something like that in our magazine.]

Thanks for all the Christian rock news and stuff but some of your articles are kinda ... well ... boring. I don't want to criticize (did I spell that right?), but halfway through some of the articles, I fell asleep. Your reviews are great and the CDs rock.

Harold Fike III
via the Internet

[zzzzzz ... whuh? I'm sorry, are you still talking?]

This is Marco from Italy. I have a hardcore band called One Truth. We're part of a movement called *Comunione e Liberazione* ("Sacrament and Salvation"). There was a meeting in December for the part of this movement which goes to universities all around Italy and we were 11,000. It was all so great. Some of them really like punk rock-hc-ska music, but they don't know much about this music connected to Christ ... I wish I could do something to let them know. They deserve to know there's a joyful and better way to play and listen to that stuff.

Marco
via the Internet

G'day from Oz. I manage a Christian radio station (Rhema FM 106.9) in Coffs Harbour, NSW. I want to congratulate you on an excellent magazine and the fantastic *Gas Collection* CDs that accompany it. The CDs are excellent for introducing new music. Your magazine and the CDs have helped introduce modern Christian music to a whole generation of young people who didn't know it existed—great stuff!!!

To Kevin Crabtree (Nov/Dec): Count your blessings mate, what do you think of $29.95 per CD plus postage, a much longer wait for music than you have, and a dollar that is only worth 64-cents against yours? Despite that, we rejoice we are able to obtain a product that is far greater than dollars and cents can place on it.

We're also organizing a major Christian music festival for Sept/Oct this year. Any budding bands out there who would like a trip down under to the coast in springtime, email me.

Bruce Korn
ghouse@omcs.com.au

I am so tired of getting through half of any story in any Christian publication to hear these artists complain about being called a "Christian band." The bus is not "yellow," it is a "yellow bus."

It comes down to semantics. Can we please leave this topic behind?

Jason Hughlett
via the Internet

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march/april 1998
number 17

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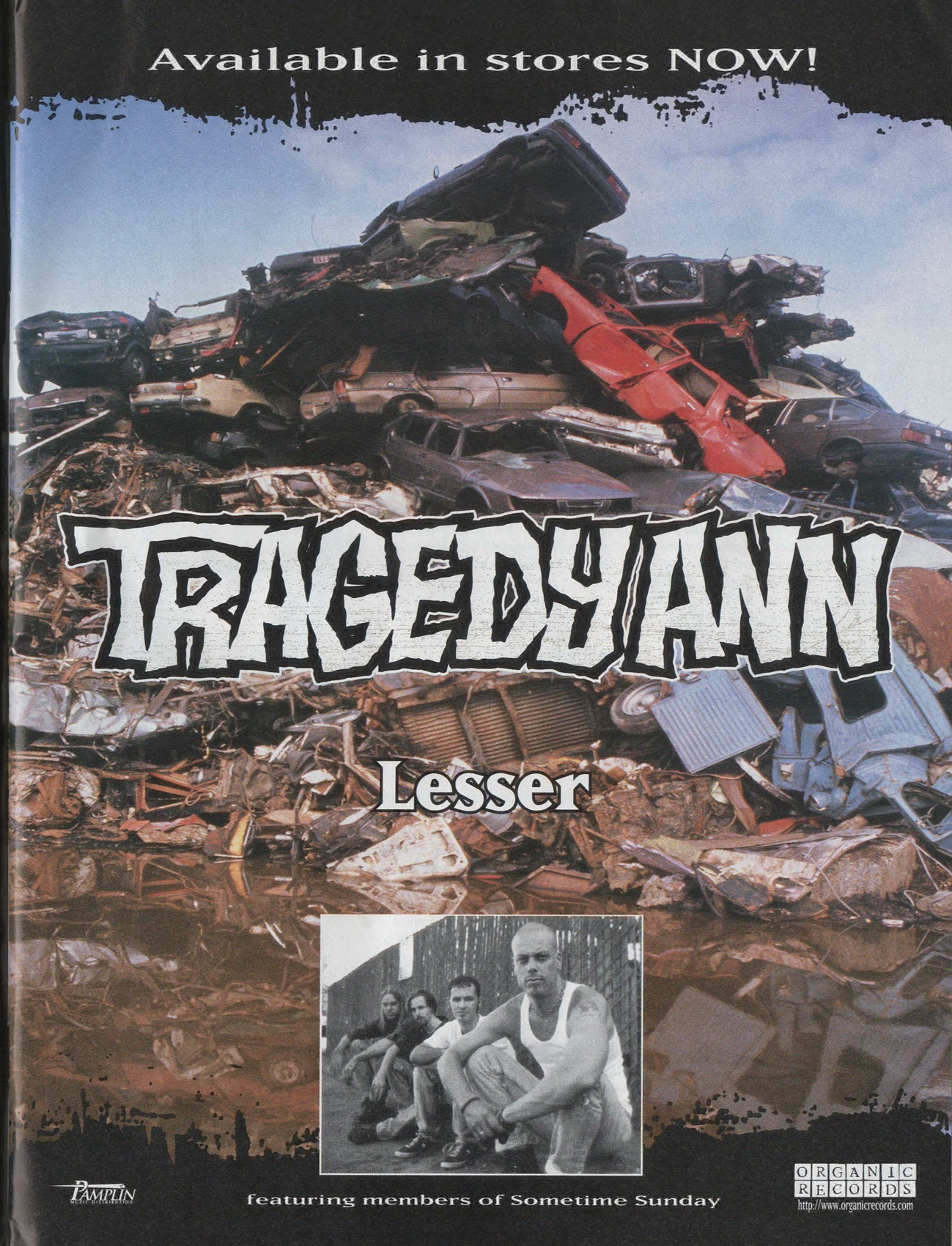


7ball is the best mag out there. You guys write about the artists that really count. Keep spinning out those awesome *GAS Collection* CDs.

I heard a band the other day called Just Visiting. They are gonna blow everyone's mind when they finally sign! Tell everyone you know, Just Visiting is on the way, man!

Todd
via the Internet

Your magazine's the best. I've been looking for a good source of info on Christian bands. The reviews are informative, the articles are cool, and the layout is great. The *GAS Collection* CDs are spiffy—what a great way to check out a band before buying the CD. Just one question: Could you possibly bring a ska band to Augusta, Ga.? I've never been to a concert, and would love to go.

Sean Moseley
via the Internet

I really do enjoy reading *7ball.* I was interested initially by the *GAS Collection* CDs, but I bought the magazine and read it. I like the feedback section, and the way you seem to be truly concerned with the opinions and comments of your readers, even when you do not agree. I also enjoy the editorials. One can sense you are not a magazine in business solely for money, but as a ministry, as well. I really appreciate all that you do for the Christian population which has few other ministries focused on meeting its needs: the alternative music crowd.

Steve Eastmond
San Antonio, TX

I really enjoy your CDs with the mag.

The only problem I have is trying to find the band's CDs. I belong to two Christian music clubs, but they just don't carry bands like P.O.D., E.D.L. or Living Sacrifice. I have looked in our local Christian bookstore, but they don't have them, either. So, at least through your CDs I can hear some of their music—keep it up!

I have become more educated through your mag. Now, my youth paster calls me "The Music Man." I give all the credit to you guys.

Jeremy Legg
via the Internet

[Jeremy, your local Christian bookstore should be able to special order anything you read about in 7ball. We know it's tough to find the good music sometimes, so we feel your pain. Well, OK, since we have the CDs, we don't feel as much of it ...]

I am with cool fools enterprises. We are an Online music page that deals with the rockin' side of Christian music. We deal mainly with ska and punk. We are supposedly the biggest ska site on the Internet and our punk section is growing by the second. We also have a huge database of indie/unsigned bands. We love the mag and read it till we drop! God bless you all and keep glorifying Him!

nathan [www.ameth.org/coolfools/]

What you are doing is a great ministry ... but get back to more *college music.* I would like to read about stuff *I* listen to. Don't be a bandwagon magazine.

Matthew Shaun Whitney
via the Internet

I thought the article on my favorite band, Five Iron Frenzy, was super cool. I found it informative and true. Thanx. When are you doing another MxPx article?

Mike Williams
via the Internet

[Doing an article on who?]

In your article "On the Road With Audio Adrenaline" in issue 15, they talked about body piercing. As a Christian, I don't think it's right to pierce any part of your body, not even your ears. The Scriptures say we should not look like the world. Body piercing is heathenistic. Where does it come from? Idolatrous nations; just look in *National Geographic.* They pierce their bodies to please their gods.

Christian rock singers don't need to pierce themselves to relate to teens. If people in the world see you're different from them, they'll get curious. If you do what they do, you give them no reason to ask questions.

Sarah Caissey
Willingboro, NJ

This summer I went to a Christian music festival called Kingdom Bound. I brought my Johnny Q. Public CD to get autographed because they were there. I had to go back to my campsite right before the concert ended to get my CD autographed. The lady at the merchandise

stand, the mother of the lead guitarist, said she would get my CD autographed and then I could come and get it the next day. I gave her the CD. I also gave her my address and my email address in case anything happened. I came back early the next day to get my CD and found they had packed up and left for Canada. I never heard anything from them.

I'm 12 years old and I can't go out and spend another $15 on another CD. I don't get a lot of money (I don't have a job).

Trevor Hall
via the Internet

[Oh, Trevor, you fell for the ol' "Leave the CD here and my son will sign it" trick? Doesn't the fact that they ***skipped the country*** *clue you in? *sigh* Gotee Records assures us an autographed CD is on the way.]*

Greetings from Jam4theLamb Ministries! You have been selected to receive the "Jammin' For Jesus" web site award!

You can display the award on your website as many times and in as many places as you like, as long as each one is linked back to us here at Jam4theLamb Ministries!

Congratulations, and we would really appreciate you sending us a line or two letting us know the award is now being displayed on your web site.

Jam4theLamb Ministries
[http://surf.to/jam4thelamb]

[I just want to thank all the little people ...]

What's the connection between Less than Jake and Five Iron Frenzy? I noticed one of the band members inside the Less than Jake CD had on a FIF shirt and the credits on the FIF CD listed LTJ under band to thank. Coincidence or connection?

Mike Lowery
Upper Marlboro, MD

[Congratulations! That's the connection! Keep up the good work. BTW, we love your videos.]

My name is Chris. Me and my friend Josh live in the small, small-minded town of Myrtle Creek. You helped us break the bond of country music (thank you Lord). When we drove by my neighbor's house blasting MxPx, my neighbors almost had a heart attack. We started wearing cool clothes and our whole school is now diverse. We have punks, rapsters, homies, smoothies and of course tight-pantsed cowboys. Thank you so much for helping us shake up our school and making it cool.

Chris Doss
Myrtle Creek, OR

P.S. Josh and I never wore cowboys clothes.

[Yeah, right. Keep telling yourself that.]

I have four words to say to you. This mag is awesome. *7ball* is the most ultimate magazine. It's just all good! Everything about it is great! Keep up the great work!

Alisha Riddle
Pearl, PA

[Uh, thanks, but that was 24 words.]

I see you mention the phrase "cool beans." Where'd you hear that? I got it from my youth pastor and his family and I thought we were the only ones who'd heard of it.

Sarah Pilato
Williamson, NY

[Don't you get it? I AM YOUR YOUTH PASTOR. Kinda spooky, ain't it?]

I am 15 years old and host a two hour Christian rock radio show every Saturday. You magazine is so very helpful. To top it off you give me a *[Pure Rock Report]* chart of the top 10 songs. Your mag keeps me informed.

Devin Thayer
Owensboro, KY

Hi, good mag. Yada, yada, yada. I want to know what the deal with MxPx and the Cootees is. They're the best 2 punk bands in the world but I don't understand their lack of Christian content in their songs. Are these guys burned out on Christianity or just don't have enough joy in Christ to sing about him?

Austin Britton
Gretna, NE

Letters may be edited for space, clarity, and justice for all. Send mail to: 7ball, 2525-C Lebanon Pike, Box 6, Nashville, TN 37214. Email us at 7ball@7ball.com. Cara likes peanut M&Ms.

I was wondering when you do an article on a band, if you see what they're like off-stage or when you're not talking to them to see if they really are into God and being like Him.

Joy Wicklund
Grand Rapids, MN

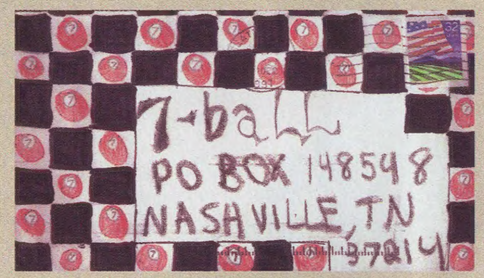
[We know Someone who does.]

I love your magazine! I have loved all the artists you have covered since I first started reading your magazine ... but there is one thing me and a lot of my friends would like for you to cover: techno! My friends and I love techno/electronica, not industrial (Mortal or Klank) or dance (nitro praise), but stuff like Prodigy, Chemical Brothers, and Aphex Twin.

My friends and I think it is a great idea

to go out and find those type of musical artists. Besides you don't just want to limit yourselves to just alternative/rock music.

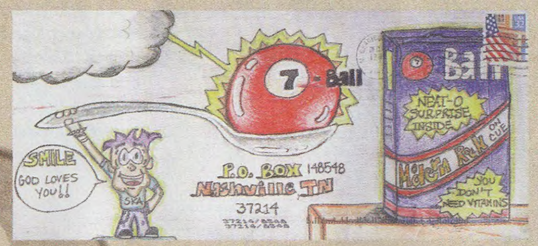
Jonathan
via the Internet

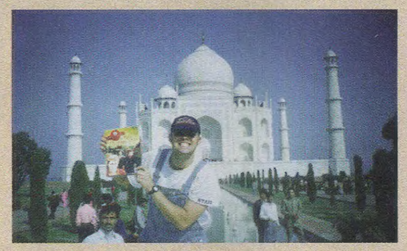


I am starting my own small record label. I will need some exposure and who better than *7ball*. I would ask for you to do a story on my label and a couple of my bands. I am not completely started yet and have no bands, but March would probably be great.

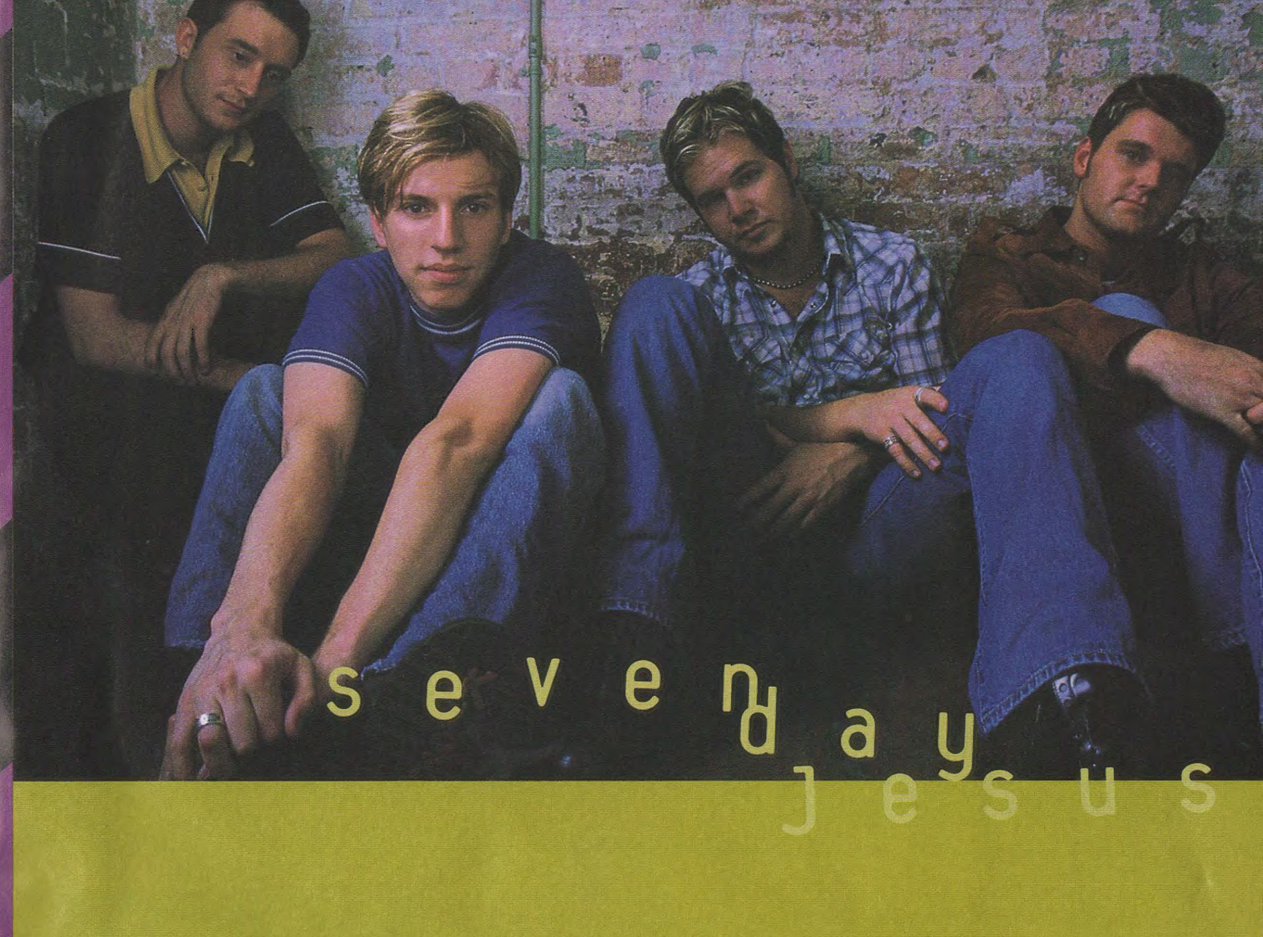
Keith Boran
Chattanooga, TN

[You haven't really thought this through, have you?]





On his third mission trip to India, Clayton King of Boiling Springs, N.C., still gets more excited about *7ball* than seeing the Taj Mahal.



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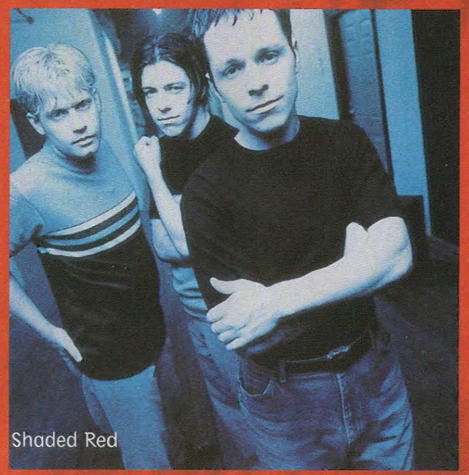
by Chris Well



Shaded Red

The members of Shaded Red were involved in a tragic auto accident January 17th. The driver of the vehicle experienced icy road conditions outside of St. Louis, and the van overturned several times. Three of the four passengers were ejected from the van. Drummer Chris Yoeman was killed (he had only started touring with the band recently); guitarist/ vocalist Jonathan Roberts was admitted to intensive care; bassist Steve Spittle was treated and released; vocalist/guitarist Jamie Roberts was not injured. Please pray for the band and the Yoeman family during their time of loss.

Waterdeep had a crummy holiday: After a show in Tulsa, Okla., their trailer was stolen with $15,000 worth of gear inside. Neither the trailer nor the gear was insured. If you want to help the band out, Vineyard Christian Fellowship in Wichita (where the band played the night before Tulsa) is gathering donations on the band's behalf, and providing tax-deductible receipts on request (include a note and a receipt will be sent to you by the end of the tax year).

Make checks or money orders payable to: Vineyard Christian Fellowship, 2020 E. Blake, Wichita, KS 67211. Be sure to write "WATERDEEP" on the memo line.

Find the band on the Web at [www.waterdeep.com].

IT'S A CONTEST!

Everyone's favorite "kinda-ska-kinda-punk-kinda-pop-just-plain-fun" band Silage is going to be hitting the road, and they want to take YOU with them! Well, OK, that could get expensive, so here's an idea. Silage and *7ball* is holding a BANNER CONTEST, and the winning entry will appear with Silage as they hit the festivals this summer!

Get out your art supplies to create the coolest banner imaginable for both Silage and *7ball magazine*. One winning banner will be selected (by the band) and taken on the road with Silage as they hit the festivals this summer! (Hints: Butcher paper or bedsheets work well, but quality is more important than size).

All banners must include the words "Silage" and "*7ball magazine*" and include the Sub·Lime logo (a lime) and the *7ball* logo (a big red ball—but why am I telling you that?). Your entry must be here by Thursday, April 30. Send banners to *7ball/Silage Bannerama!* ("Bannermania" is also acceptable), 2525-C Lebanon Pike, Box 6, Nashville, TN 37214. Banners will not be returned unless packaging with prepaid postage is included.

Silage hits the studio soon to start work on a fall release. Between now and then, they'll be on the road with Third Day and Grammatrain and also play 17 (!) festivals this summer.

AND NOW, THE NEWS

What's the deal with Danielson? They're getting all sorts of general market press, including *Spin*, *CMJ Monthly* and *Option*. The group's upcoming album has a "trinity" concept, involving the entities "Brother Danielson," "Danielson Famile" and "Danielsonship."

SKAAAAAAAAAAA!!!!!

Five Iron Frenzy joins the *Ska Against Racism Tour* in April, hitting stadiums with secular bands like Less Than Jake, Hepcat, MU330 and Mustard Plug. The members of FIF ask for your prayers during the tour, as they want to serve God with this open door.

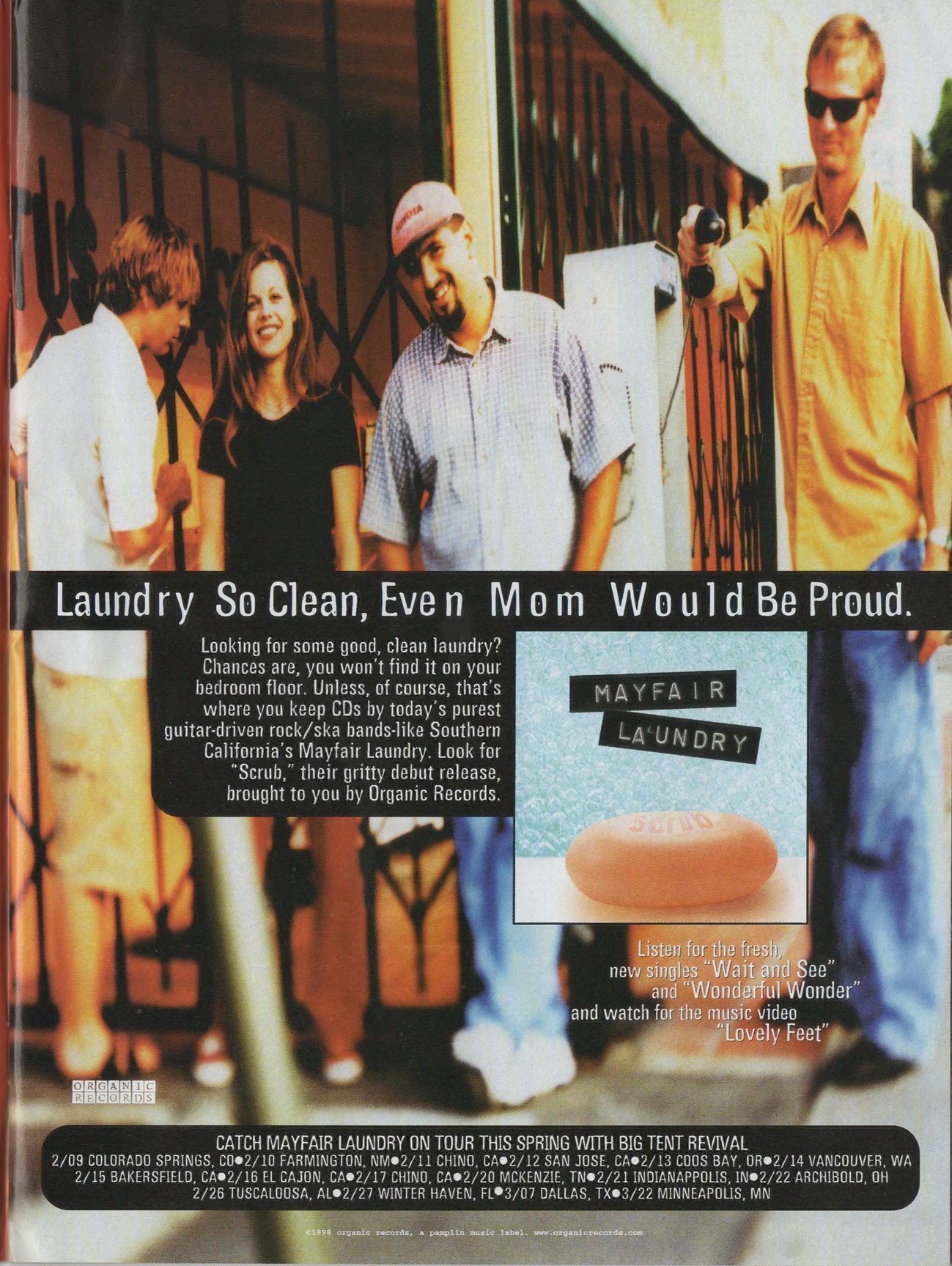
Sure, FIF, Supertones and Insyderz get all the press, but there are other Christian ska bands. Meet some of them on *Skanktified* (N·Soul/ Eclectica), with 22 tracks from new, indie, underground and recently-signed bands. Yakety Yak Records, a brand-new label, launches with a two-volume compilation of 20 ska bands from coast to coast. See Yakety Yak on the Web [www.christianska.com/yakety].

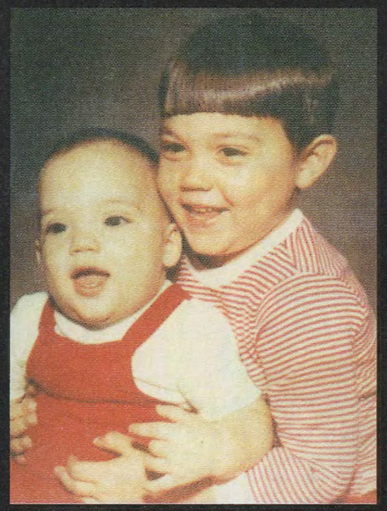
Speaking of ska, watch for The Dingees. Although the band (which includes members of The Supertones) plays punk, ska and reggae, a fast way to get on their bad side is to suggest they mix any of it up. For the record, they play straight punk songs, straight ska songs and straight reggae songs—what's cool is that they rock at all three styles.

NOT SKA

Regular *7ball* contributor and pal Brad Caviness has become the new editor of *Ricochet Internet Magazine* [www.ricochetmusic.com]. Under the guidance of Web wizard Brad Koltas, also in the process of re-inventing our own *7ball* site [www.7ball.com], *RIM* is a pretty cool place to visit.

No sooner do the members of Squad 5-O rock the house on the *Keenan Ivory Wayans* show than All Star United gets invited to write and record the soundtrack for the hot British children's show, *Rabbit Stone*. However, ASU (who recently witnessed to Marilyn Manson; see last issue's news) declined the offer when they discovered *Rabbit Stone* would include an "atheist puppet" as one of its characters.





Canadian popsters Hokus Pick are probably touring the U.S. West Coast this spring. By the way, they sent me a cool gift (the secret to guaranteeing press)—a pair of shoes, Fluevog Angels [www.fluevog.ca/catalog_1.html].

NEW STUFF TO BUY

Echoing Green have just finished a new electronica/ modern rock album. The album includes help from Jerome Fontamillas of Fold Zandura, Rivulets and Violets, Sherri Youngward, and Masaki (formerly of Dime Store Prophets).

Come April, watch for Bon Voyage, with Jason Martin (Starflyer 59), Matt McCartie (Driver Eight) and Julie Martin (Jason's wife) on lead vocals. Produced by Gene Eugene, the project is described as "a more slick and sugary Starflyer 59 topped with sassy female vocals."

The new solo album from Maire Brennan, *Perfect Time*, is due March. Maire (pronounced "May-a"), sister of Enya, is the voice of Celtic supergroup Clannad—whom you may have heard at the movies (including *Patriot Games*) or on that big Volkswagen commercial a few years back.

Indie label Jackson Rubio cranks the cool meter up to No. 5 (I have no idea what I'm talking about) with The Halo Friendlies, an all-girl alternative band. The album combines punk and alternative with a girlish pop sound. They're gearing up for extensive touring.

After years as an import, Saviour Machine has U.S. distribution. *Legend 1* and *Legend 2* should be on shelves by the time you read this (unless you have some special powers that enable you to read magazines before they're printed). Saviour Machine tours the States this summer.

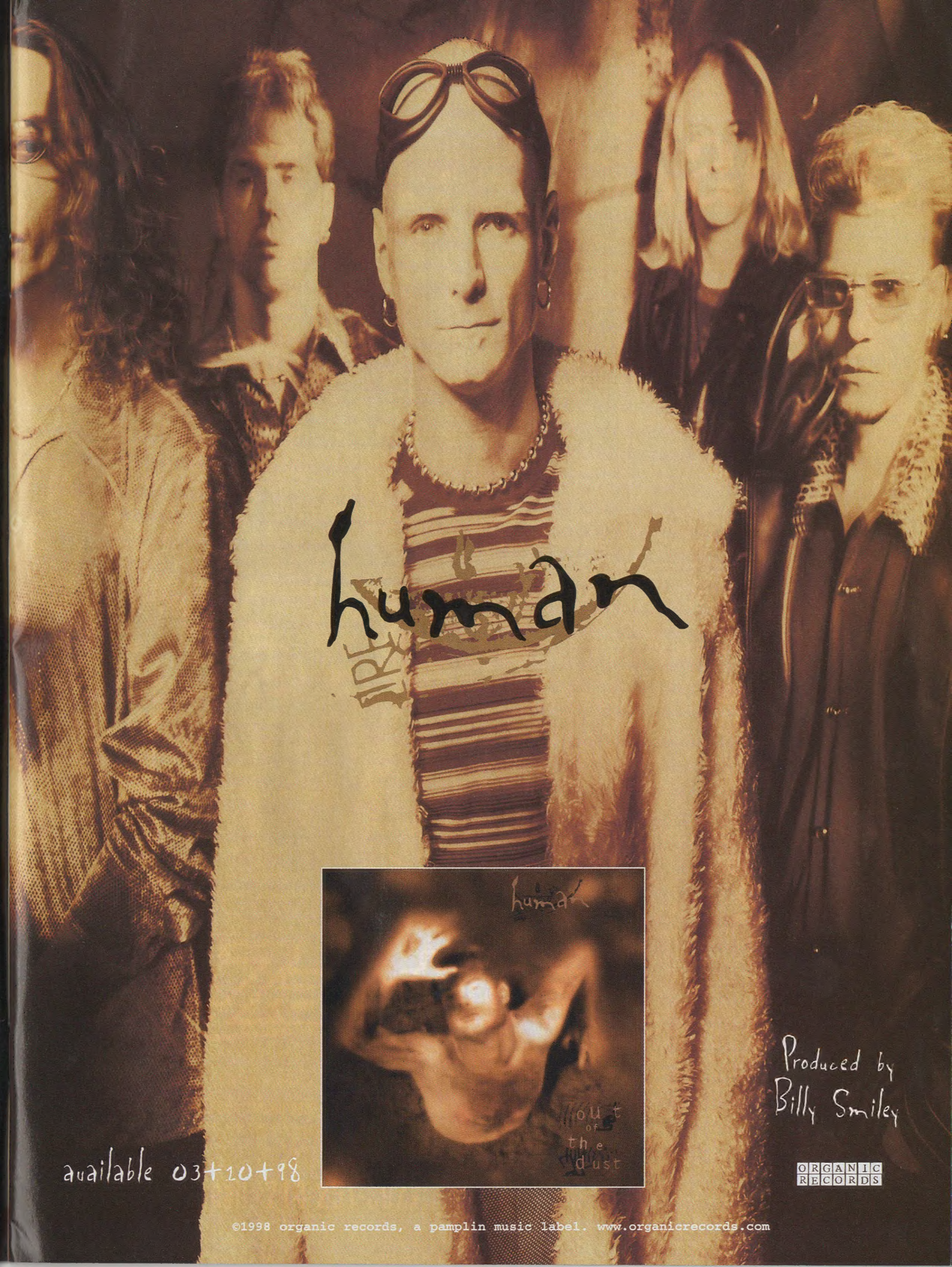
Speaking of imports, Cameron Dante (of World Wide Message Tribe) checks in with *Preacha [Geography of a Journey]*. Dante's testimony is set to heart palpitating dance music, and structured so it's easy to follow the stages of his spiritual journey through the liner notes (which helps, since there are some *long* instrumental passages).

We recently got to see Willie Aames in action as Bibleman. The alum of *Charles in Charge* and *Eight Is Enough* was in town to perform a Bibleman skit for a convention, and had such a line of autograph-seekers afterwards that we did the rude thing and went to dinner without

him. At dinner, I learned Pamplin Entertainment's Mike Schatz and wife Sarah just celebrated their 12th Anniversary in January. Congrats!

IN THE STUDIO

Allan Aguirre is working on Scaterd Few's new release, *Grandmothers Spaceship*, due May ... the band Honey is working on a May release, produced by members of Jars of Clay and also members of Prayer Chain ... johnny Q. public is *finally* getting close to a sophomore album, slated for July ... reggae artists Temple Yard (with former members of Christafari) are working on an album for May ... Morella's Forest is recording a new album, which promises to be more elec-



7ball newsnews

tronic ... and Curious Fools are *finally* putting together a follow-up to *Read*, planning to tour heavily when the record comes out in May.

Pop megatrio dc Talk is should have a new album this summer. Then they take the efforts of The E.R.A.C.E. Foundation on the road, joined by chart-topping R&B group God's Property, to several summer festivals. Dubbed "E.R.A.C.E. Night," the tour will promote a theme of racial reconciliation and feature several other guests!

THE '80s AREN'T DEAD, THEY'RE JUST SLEEPING

Guardian has re-recorded the Stryper CD *The Yellow And Black Attack* in their spare time. Stryper alum Oz Fox recently joined Guardian onstage at an Orange County, Calif., show and played "C'mon Rock" with the band. Meanwhile, Fox and Tim Gaines have formed a new band, SinDizzy. Visit the Web site: [http://members.aol.com/sindizzy/sindizzy.htm].

JARS, JARS, JARS!

As the Jars of Clay saga just goes onward and upward, they aren't satisfied to stick with music: They are determined to conquer the worlds of television, films and print. They recently made *another* big-deal network television appearance; they have a song on *another* movie soundtrack; and they are endorsing a special printing of a classic Christian book.

After getting bumped once or twice on *The Late Show with David Letterman* (hey, they'll bump anybody), Jars pre-taped their performance of the smash hit "Crazy Times" for replay later in the week. It gave Dave a chance to act particularly loopy (something that only made sense after it was explained to me that Jars was pre-taped ... OK, so maybe I'm not the sharpest knife in the drawer).

The song "Flood," from the band's self-titled debut, is featured as the end title track for the film *Hard Rain*. The film, starring Christian Slater and Morgan Freeman, hit theaters in January. "Flood" will also be included in the *Hard Rain* motion picture soundtrack, along with the film's original score.

The members of Jars haven't written a book—yet—but there is a new Jars of Clay Collector's Edition of Hannah Hurnard's best-selling *Hinds' Feet On High Places.* The members of Jars, of course, were deeply influenced by the book during the making of *Much Afraid.* Although the record is not a concept album, many of the songs reflect the themes of the book. The limited edition of the book includes a foreword written by the band, a photo gallery and Bible study guidelines.

FOR INDIE BANDS ONLY

As you may have noticed, choice indie cuts have been appearing on the *7ball GAS Collector CD* series and RELEASE magazine's *SODA Collector CD* series. There is no charge. We just have to like you. If you think you have what it takes, you need to get the attention of Anne Thompson, c/o Vox Publishing, 2525-C Lebanon Pike, Box 6, Nashville, TN 37214.

Xytar Digital Systems is also looking for unsigned bands, for a series of compilation CDs. There is no charge. Submit a cassette or CD, along with pertinent info (including a daytime phone number) to: Kellie Moore, Xytar Digital Systems; P.O. Box 282248; San Francisco, CA 94128. Call (650) 697-7493.

THIS JUST IN

Contrary to previous reports, apparently Squad 5-O did *not* appear on *Keenan Ivory Wayans,* All Star United did *not* witness to Marilyn Manson, and there is no such show as *Rabbit Stone.*

Thus ends another edition of the news. Send news, music and bribes to Chris Well/*7ball*, c/o Vox Publishing, 2525-C Lebanon Pike, Box 6, Nashville, TN 37214.

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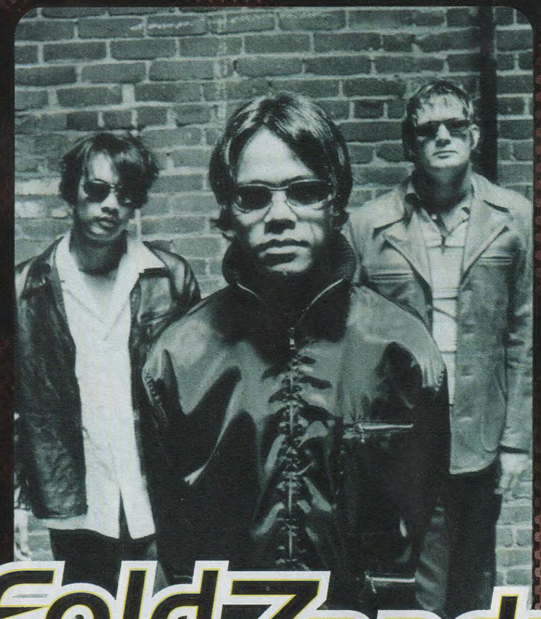

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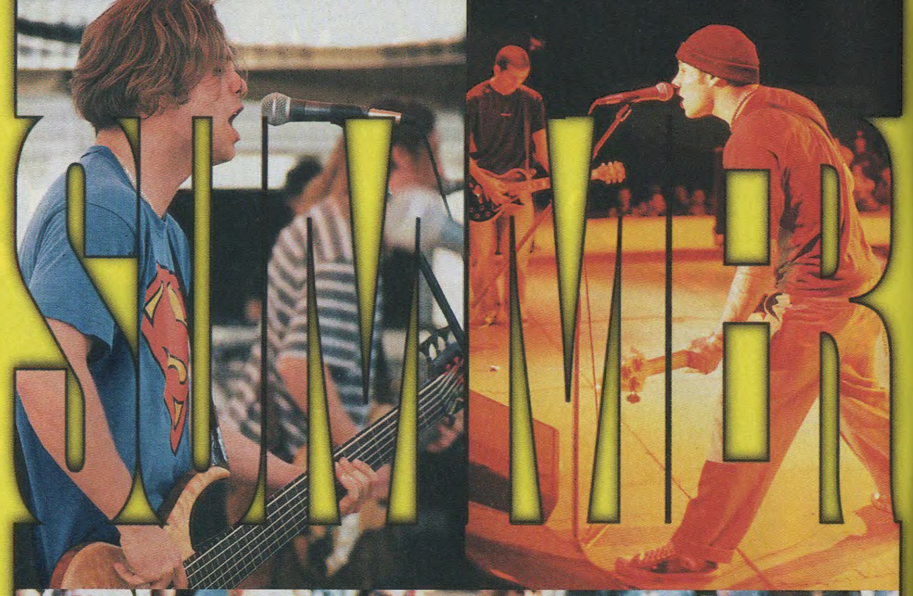
ALL DATES SUBJECT TO CHANGE
MANY MORE DATES TBA

BIG SUMMER FESTIVAL PREVIEW



IT'S NOT TOO EARLY TO START making your summer plans. If you want to hit the festivals (a great way to see a lot of bands and meet a lot of people you wouldn't normally be able to), tickets are usually cheaper if you order them in advance. Here are a few of your options:

The **Creation Festival** is now coast to coast! [well, kinda.] This year, not only will the Creation Festival celebrate its 19th year at **Agape Farm** in Mount Union, Pa., but Creation '98 will premiere at **The Gorge** in George, Wash., from July 23-25. The Agape Farm, which brings in about 50,000 people annually, will be held June 24-27 in the western Pennsylvania mountains. The great thing about Creation, the nation's largest festival (and that was before it doubled!), is that there is plenty of music for a wide range of listening interests. You can rock with the *7ball*-sponsored **Fringe Stage**. On the mainstage, see the likes of **The Supertones**, **Third Day** or **dc Talk**, or even contemporary artists like **Steven Curtis Chapman**, **Jaci Velasquez** or **God's Property**. Speakers scheduled include **Greg Laurie**, **Lori Salerno**, **Buster Soaries** and **Miles McPherson**. In addition to camping, music and speaking, featured activities include: **Acoustic Café**; the candlelight worship service Friday night; and the children's ministry, featuring music, clowns, drama, and arts and crafts. Call (800) 327-6921 for more info.

This year's **Cornerstone Festival** is July 1-5 in Bushnell, Ill. Cornerstone features not only a lot of rock and modern music, but sports events (including a 5-kilometer race and a mountain-climbing wall) and arts events. Call (773) 989-2087.

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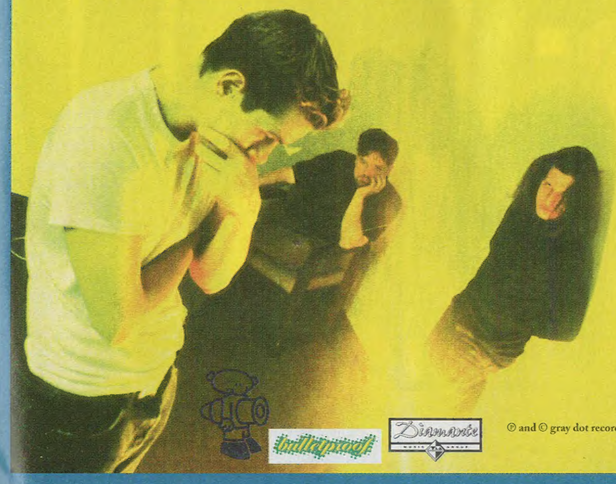

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COMING THIS APRIL ...
Squad Five-O

"FIGHT THE SYSTEM"

BIG SUMMER FESTIVAL PREVIEW

Tom Fest has grown to two sites now: In Stevenson, WA (140 bands!), August 27-31; and at the new site in Kaufman, TX (100 bands!) August 20-23. Call (503) 254-6458 or find them on the Web at [www.tomfest.com].

SonShine '98 sports wall-to-wall music, with four stages simultaneously, featuring established artists and local bands. Held July 9-11 at Willmar Civic Center in Willmar, Minn., the surrounding 30 acres are used for camping during the event. Call (800) 233-3378.

AtlantaFest is held at Six Flags Over Georgia June 17-20, offering seminars, a talent search competition and park attendance 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. daily. Concerts follow on the main stage until 11 p.m. and on the Edge Stage from 11:15 p.m. to 2 a.m. Call (800) 783-8839.

Up north, SonFest '98 rocks Anchorage, Alaska, June 12-14. Contact Joel Kiekintveld, Youth Pastor, Trinity CRC & Sonfest '98 Band Coordinator, 3000 E. 16th, Anchorage, AK 99058. (907) 277-4812 or (907) 440-9498. Email [XTREME-JK@Juno.com].

If you're heading to Daytona for Spring Break, don't miss Spring Harvest '98, March 19-22. Along with guest speakers, sports and ocean-side events, rock with All Star United, The Insyderz, Maximillian, Newsboys, Third Day and many others. You can also get missionary training (for beginners to seasoned missionaries). Call (248) 865-3340.

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GAS Collection CD Volume 6

How to Use this page

1. Cut along dotted line.
2. Fold in half.
3. Slide into jewel case.
4. Repeat.

14. **CLOUD2GROUND** "Face 2 Face" N-Soul 7:10
(written by Chad, Steve, Jeremy) © 1997 M&M Productions
Technomeisters Cloud2Ground weave their sound from different electronic styles, with cinematic flourishes threading the package together. On *e-maj/n*, they run the gamut from high-energy dance music to simple ambient piano. "Face 2 Face" is one of two vocal tracks, exhibiting a keen Brit-pop influence.

SOMEBODY SHOW THESE GUYS:

14. **OUTSIDERS** "Everybody Get On Down" (unsigned) 4:19
(written by The Outsiders) © 1997 Outsiders
Adding to the list of Greenville College alumni with a bright future (Jars of Clay, Sarah John), Outsiders have indie recordings and have appeared on the indie compilation *Eclectica* (N-Soul). "Everybody Get On Down," one of their latest demos, showcases their fresh modern pop blend of jazz, hip-hop and such R & B influences as Stevie Wonder and Jon Gibson. Check out their site at [www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/Palms/3833] or email them at [outsiders808@hotmail.com].

15. **WATERDEEP** "I Know the Plans" (unsigned) 4:28
(written by L. Chaffer) © 1997 Hey Ruth Music
On any given night in the midwest you might find Waterdeep in a church basement, coffeehouse, college campus or just your average foggy street corner. The band, fronted by husband and wife Don and Lori Chaffer, has an extensive repertoire of charged acoustic rock and a highly improvisational group of musicians to bring it to life. Get on their mailing list by emailing [bettchaf@worldnet.att.net email]. Find the band on the Web at [www.waterdeep.com].

1. **BIG TENT REVIVAL** "Rivalry" Ardent/ForeFront 3:59
(written by S. Wiggins) © 1998 Photon Music (BMI)
For *Amplifier*, BTR cranks out the rock 'n' roll. "People tell us they love our live show," says guitarist Randy Williams. "We wanted to record an album with that intensity." The track "Rivalry" reprimands those who would use surface issues to judge some Christians artists "holier" than others.

2. **BON VOYAGE** "Honeymoon" BEC 3:23
(written by J. Martin) © 1998 Thirsty Moon River Publishing (ASCAP)
Fronted by Starflyer 59's Jason Martin and wife Julie, *Bon Voyage* contains many of the ingredients that make Starflyer successful, honed to fit pop parameters. Their unwavering dedication to melody is most evident; even within the boundaries of melodic pop, Jason Martin flirts with brilliance.

3. **TIM TABER** "God of Mine" Maranatha! 4:08
(written by P. Shambrook) © 1997 Maranatha Music (BMI)
Maranatha! presents praise and worship music for a new generation with *Dry Bones Dancing*. "God of Mine" features the stirring vocals of Tim Taber (ex-Prayer Chain) and is written by Peter Shambrook, a remarkable artist in his own right. Other contributors on the record include Chris Lizotte and Shawn Tubbs.

4. **JOY ELECTRIC** "Monosynth" BEC 3:18
(written by K. Martin) © 1997 Thirsty Moon River Publishing
With the recent rush for electronic music, Joy Electric's Ronnie Martin is sitting

GAS Collection 6

GAS Collection CD Volume 6

(written by Pep Squad) © 1998 We Own Your Songs (SESAC)
Pep Squad mixes noisy feedback, breathy vocals and pop melodies on their debut, *No Day*. While "Angel" is a brooding number, the rest of *No Day* is chock-full of indie power pop. Lyrically, the members of Pep Squad deal with issues that we all face (including relationships, detachment, longing and love).

9. **LLOYD** "Vapor" Organic 4:41
(written by D. Youngblood) © 1998 Pamplin Music
Although *Thoughts From A Driveway* is their debut as Lloyd, the members have several collective years experience. "Lloyd is what we've always been looking for," drummer Rick Weinland says. "It's the first time we've talked about issues we feel strongly about." The song "Vapor" is about an artist who hears his own song on the radio and realizes he doesn't measure up to the standard he's singing about.

10. **THE ELECTRICS** "Get to Heaven" SoreBellum 2:41
(written by S. Horner) © 1997 5 Minute Walk Music (ASCAP)
Consistently named one of the most popular live acts in Europe, The Electrics first appeared in America with a self-titled collection last year. The Celtic rock band, which hails from Scotland and Ireland, has been in the studio with producer Phil Madeira. Portions will be pieced together in Nashville and Scotland for their upcoming soph release, which hits stores early July.

11. **SEND THE BEGGAR** "Matter" Rustproof 4:30
(written by M. Bentley, C. Freeman) © 1997 O.P.C.O.S. Publishing, Kidproof Music (SESAC)
Send The Beggar began as a church praise and worship team, but their congregation encouraged them to think bigger. "I know I wouldn't be half the player or writer—this band wouldn't exist—if God wouldn't have used us and taught us a lot of lessons when we were in the praise and worship band."

12. **DRYVE** "Thrifty Mr. Kickstar" SoreBellum 6:26
(written by Dryve) © 1997 Bare Feet On the Wheel Music/ Five Minute Walk Music (ASCAP)
For a debut album, *Thrifty Mr. Kickstar* did pretty well for Dryve on the college

pretty. On *Robot Rock*, sweet melodies are conducted on analog synthesizers, with arcade sounds bobbing to the surface. "Everybody mentions the video game thing, but it doesn't sound that way to me," Martin says. "I don't even own a video game system. I just like my songs to sound bubbly."

5. **DALE THOMPSON AND THE KENTUCKY CADILLACS** "The Road Less Traveled" Organic 4:35
(written by D. Thompson) © 1997 Bride Music Publishing (SESAC)
Dale Thompson steps away from his day job with hard-rock band Bride for the much bluesier *Dale Thompson and the Kentucky Cadillacs*. His blues projects sometimes raise concerns about whether a Christian songwriter should play such a "dark" style of music. "Where true blues is more sexually-oriented and talks of heartache," Thompson says, "I have attempted to bring a positive and uplifting message to the audience."

6. **THE DINGEES** "Bulletproof" BEC 2:48
(written by The Dingees) © 1998 Thirsty Moon Publishing (ASCAP)
The Dingees are a hard band to pin down musically. They play punk, ska and reggae, but they don't actually mix any of it up. The band (which includes members of The Supertones) recently appeared on the underground ska compilation *Skanktified*, and have already made the leap to ground level with their BEC debut, *Armageddon Massive*.

7. **REFLESCENT TIDE** "Leaving" Rugged 3:19
(written by J. Weiss) © 1997 Dogslash Music (BMI)
Combining the passion of metal with the playful, melodic sensibilities of modern pop, Reflescent Tide is sometimes difficult to categorize. On *Spring Catalog*, songwriter Jeff Weiss is influenced by the likes of Rich Mullins, C.S. Lewis and fantasy novelist Robert Jordan. "Leaving," inspired by Max Lucado's book *And the Angels Were Silent*, compares the pain at the Garden of Eden with the triumph at the Garden of Gethsemane.

8. **PEP SQUAD** "Angel" BEC 3:43

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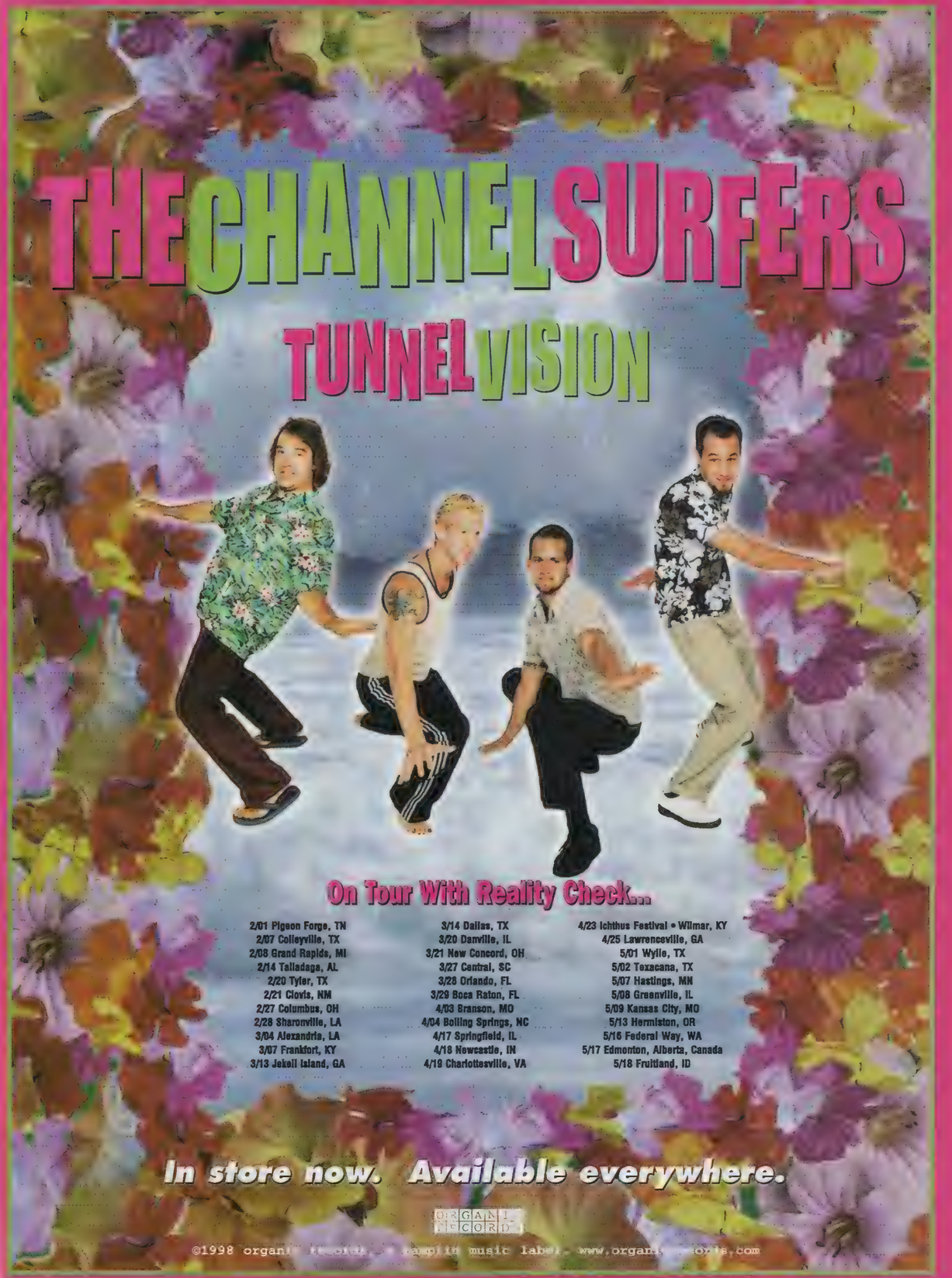

"I'm just a guy crawling through life. I hear people talking about the Christian walk and I have to laugh! I've never had a walk. It's always been a crawl. More often than not, I am very close to the gravel and I'm feeling every bump! But the point of being an artist is this: It is the compelling human need to somehow express things that cannot be expressed."

You have to run awfully fast to catch up with Rick Elias. After all, he is a very busy man. Songwriter, producer, performer, recording artist, sometime actor, Elias has seen his star rise almost faster than he can keep up.

Elias paid his dues playing the southern California club circuit for most of the '80s before releasing two critically-acclaimed albums, *Rick Elias and the Confessions* and *Ten Stories*. However, both records fell victim to poor distribution.

Since then, Elias moved to Nashville and has worked with the likes of Rich Mullins, Randy Stonehill, Margaret Becker, Great Britain's Split Level, and most recently, Bob Carlisle [on the multi-platinum *Butterfly Kisses (Shades of Grace)*]. Last year, Elias landed five songs on the soundtrack of Tom Hanks' *That Thing You Do* (he even had a cameo roll in the film).

All that, and Elias has just released his first solo project in nearly seven years, *Blink*. I finally corner him on the phone one morning at the bright and cheery hour of 8:30. He had been in the studio until somewhere in the neighborhood of 4:30 a.m. "I'm so overwhelmed with work I can barely think," he says, stifling a yawn. With a brief laugh he adds, "If you want to talk about mixing consoles maybe that's where we should start!"

As intriguing as the topic seems, I opt instead to ask him about *Blink*. "It's just a collection of demos," he says. *Just a collection of demos?* "Yeah, it's kind of a record and it kind of isn't," he explains.

OK, I admit to being a smidgen confused. "It was never made to be a record," he elucidates. "These are songs I never really intended for anyone to hear. Usually, when you get ready to make a record, you know what the songs are going to be and you have the full intention of releasing those songs. On this record, there was none of that. Because of that, at least for me personally, it wound up being a bit ... purer of an offering than it would have been otherwise."

The project started out when Elias was preparing to play England's Greenbelt festival. He thought it might be nice to have some of his music available to sell there. "The market is so much smaller there, and they don't have enough money to pay you much more than just getting over there to play," he says. "I thought it might be nice to buy the kids some clothes and take my wife out to eat, so I decided to try to put a little CD together."

Elias called on his old friend Adrian Thompson of Split Level, who heads up a small Christian label in London, to package it for him. "In England, it was very much a basement tape, which is fine, because we were only going to make around 500 copies. Then Dino Elefante from Pamplin heard about it. We went to lunch and he said, *We'd like to do it.* So we remixed it, took some pictures, redid the artwork, and there you have it!"

Elias describes the collection as personal, somewhat edgy songs that would not have fit with any current Christian artist. They are songs about life—and, like life, are at once simple and yet very complex. "It is a contradiction," he says. "I'm just a guy crawling through life. I hear people talking about the *Christian walk* and I have to laugh! I've never had a walk. It's always been a crawl.

More often than not, I am very close to the gravel and I'm feeling every bump! But the point of being an artist is this: It is the compelling human need to somehow express things that cannot be expressed."

With a sense of pride, he says these are some of the best songs he has written in years. Though he primarily writes songs for other artists to perform, he prefers to write songs for himself. "If I liked it, usually I could find another artist who liked it, too. I didn't really get into the hack songwriting thing. You know, *Oh, so-and-so wants a song about this*, and you try to give it to them by the end of the day."

Yet, it was just that kind of "hack songwriting thing" that landed Elias in the middle of *That Thing You Do.* While playing in his band in southern California, Elias and fellow band member Scott Rogness struck up a friendship with young Hollywood producer Gary Goetzman. Elias and Rogness eventually left L.A. in favor of Nashville, but Scott continued to exchange Christmas cards with Goetzman and they would occasionally talk on the phone.

Goetzman went on to produce such hits as *Silence Of The Lambs* and, later, *Philadelphia*, with Tom Hanks. Elias was somewhat amazed when Rogness told him Goetzman had called to see if they might be interested in pitching a song for his upcoming film, *That Thing You Do.*

"He told us the basic storyline, about this band in 1964 that was supposed to be America's answer to the Beatles. We wrote the song in about an hour, demo'ed it the next day and sent it off FedEx. Then we looked at each other and said, *Forget it! It'll never happen.* I mean, this was a Tom Hanks film. Everybody from Sting to Paul McCartney would be pitching this film."

Goetzman called back the same day they sent the demo off. Everyone involved loved their work and wanted more. Elias found himself working more and more closely with Goetzman, eventually spending three weeks on the set and producing and performing on the soundtrack.

Asked if he intends to pursue more movie soundtrack opportunities, Elias laughs. "They seem to be pursuing me! I have a couple of opportunities to work on some independent films."

Yes, Rick Elias is a very busy man. In addition to releasing his own CD, he is currently producing Randy Stonehill's new album, as well as working on several other projects. "I feel very blessed to have this level of work. I can remember when I had *no* work. This is much better than that!" 7

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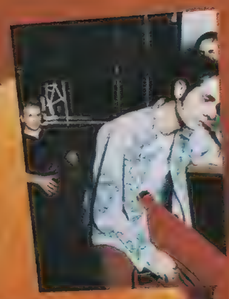
ERIC CHAMPION



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insyderz

"Contemporary worship has never really seemed very contemporary to me," says Steve Taylor. "*[Skalleluia]* represents one of the first times that a worship album actually put me into a worshipful mood."

The Insyderz, the finest ska-core export of Royal Oak, Mich., have blazed their own trail for some three years. Through a clear focus on their collective mission, the six have overcome obstacles that would have shut other bands down, including multiple label difficulties and changes in the line-up. The group has not only survived; it has thrived.

Devotion is the key to understanding The Insyderz. The band members are doggedly devoted to their music, exploring elements of the ska style while remaining studiously true to its roots. The Insyderz show incredible devotion to their audience, expressing great personal care and concern for the individual lives within every crowd.

Most of all, the players are devoted to God. The Insyderz are unique in today's underground Christian scene, with a tremendous emphasis on ministry. Although drummer Nate Sjogren is quick to assure, "We try to rock as much as we talk," the band's focus on directly communicating the Gospel is uncommon. Nowhere are the band's loves and priorities made more obvious than on their follow-up to their acclaimed debut *Motor City Ska*. The Insyderz' new collection, *The Insyderz Present Skalleluia*, is an entire album of praise and worship music. The new project is true to the band's third wave ska genre, as well as its hardcore background. *The Insyderz Present Skalleluia* virtually explodes with energy. The album will be released on Christian rock vanguard Steve Taylor's fledgling record label, Squint Entertainment.

This time out, backed by a label with nothing but upward momentum, The Insyderz are more poised to realize their vision than ever. The band has taken the album on the road, with Plankeye and Morella's Forest. "We're pretty stoked about it, because we're just going to be doing worship, and focusing on leading the audience," explains Sjogren. "We're encouraging Christians to bring their non-Christian friends. This will be a neutral environment: a concert. We encourage those kids to be praying for their friends, that they would experience God in a fresh way. Maybe through seeing others worship, they might start to search within themselves for what they're missing."

While recognizing that other artists can honor God simply through artistic creativity and offering one's best effort in music, Sjogren comments, "I've often said that

we weren't called to be recording artists, but we were called to be evangelists. I love our music; I think that albums are great tools, and recording is a challenge. There's an excellence there to be achieved and strived for. We're called to be apostles, though—preaching the Word, meeting with people one on one, and being with these kids."

One wonders whether a young band with growing momentum should have been more interested in releasing a sophomore album of original material before embarking upon a project like *The Insyderz Present Skallelujia*. Trombone player Mike Rowland clarifies: "The praise album has always been a part of our vision, since we started the band. It has been the desire of our hearts. We spend a lot of time in prayer, meditating on what material should be included on an album. God revealed to us that this was the time. He opened the doors for us, and we took the opportunity."

Ska-powered praise and worship has been a part of The Insyderz' live show since the beginning. "At the end of our sets, we'd do some worship," says vocalist Joe Yerke. "Before *Motor City Ska* came out, kids would come up to us after the show and ask whether we were going to put 'Lord, I Lift Your Name on High' or 'Awesome God' on our album."

"We would say, *Nah, I don't think we're gonna,*" Yerke continues. "So many kids would ask, though. Finally, we decided we should put out a whole full-fledged praise album."

Label magnate Steve Taylor is equally enthusiastic. "I think *Skallelujia* is awesome. Probably to my own discredit, contemporary worship has never really seemed very *contemporary* to me. This album represents one of the first times a worship album actually put me into a worshipful mood. I think it's a totally reverent album, and it's so joyful. It makes me happy every time I put the record on."

Taylor says he takes the album along when running; the super-charged music, no doubt, helps him get wherever he's going much faster. "I was actually running with it recently, and 'Awesome God' came on. I had to put my hands up to God." It is indeed a shame Rich Mullins didn't get to hear this fresh interpretation of his signature song. Taylor muses, "I think Rich would have thought, *This version gets it right.* I think he would have loved it."

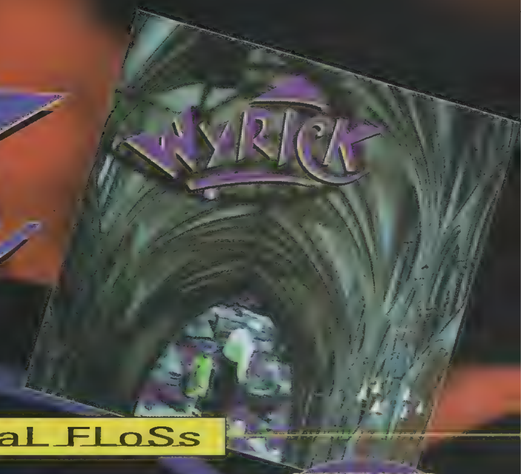
The essence of *Skallelujia* is utterly contemporary, speaking directly to The Insyderz' audience. Factions among the band's young audience aren't necessarily enthusiastic about traditional forms of worship. "There are so many kids out there, punk rock kids or whatever," Yerke says. "Whether it's just being bull-headed, or whether they honestly don't like the music, they can't get into the Keith Greens and the Rich Mullinses. It's a shame, because there are some great songs out there," offers Yerke. "If only these kids would say, *I could put being punk aside for a second and enjoy some great worshipful music.*"

He continues, "Other times, though, we just need to get fired up. That's what we decided to do with this album. I thank God for using us to put out a worship album that's like nothing that's ever been done before."

In the midst of a booming scene, The Insyderz define their brand of ska as being "right in the middle of the third wave," according to Sjogren. "The whole ska-core genre, which basically started with the Mighty Mighty Bosstones years ago, is what we now call *third wave*," he explains. "Bands like Reel Big Fish and Less Than Jake are part of the third wave, also. In no way do we think we're a Two-Tone band, riding on the coattails of Madness or Bad Manners."

Yerke's vocal delivery hammers its way to the front of The Insyderz' animated mix. It's completely over the top: a raw, forceful and aggressive vocal style. "That's the kind of stuff that I like," Yerke confesses. On a rare occasion, however, as on "We Will Glorify," Yerke can actually be caught "singing." "I like to sing, because it makes my mother happy," he says, "but I do prefer the harder-edged stuff. My favorite bands, like The Bosstones, Slapstick, and Less Than Jake, all have that rough vocal. It's actually just how I sing."

WYRICK



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insyderz

Yerke says. "I don't really hold a note very well, like Amy Grant or Michael W. Smith. If I knew their secret techniques, maybe I would," he says, laughing.

Following the fashion of early Bosstones records, The Insyderz sound is founded on a hardcore rhythm section and Kyle Wasil's hyper-energetic guitar playing. The brass section is brought into the songwriting, and the ska feel is incorporated. Along the way, the band incorporates smatterings of anything else that sounds fun at the time. "Lord, I Lift Your Name on High" and "Jesus Draw Me Close" sport more of a pure reggae approach. Then, there's the doo-wop crooning on "Jesus, Name Above All Names."

Bassist Beau McCarthy recalls, "For the beginning of that song, we wanted to get a very authentic 50s feel. The background vocals and timpani really help bring that out. Gene Eugene and Terry Taylor helped with those arrangements. We got a great kick out of it!" The band's brass section draws much of its talent and training from some of the best-known horn players anywhere: The Salvation Army brass bands. Rowland confides, "Several of us are from the Salvation Army church. Our musical roots go back to there; we've been involved in Salvation Army bands. That's where we get a lot of influence for our horn parts and melodic lines."

Sjogren explains that in England, Salvation Army brass bands are looked upon with high regard, even performing with major symphonic and concert bands. "In the United States, there's not much of a movement built around concert bands," he says. "Here, that sort of thing is looked upon as *traditional* music, whereas in the UK, it's still very popular."

"A lot of the United States' Salvation Army bands are getting into swing, and contemporary styles, with an almost acid-jazz feel," Sjogren observes. "They're trying very hard to appeal to a broader cross-section of people who listen to instrumental music, and bring them into their churches."

In addition to their familiarity with the music of the Salvation Army church, many of the band members also have first-hand familiarity with the Salvation Army's dedication to community outreach and charitable service. The Insyderz have a habit of taking off the months of November and December, in order to spend time with family and get involved with church efforts. Rowland is a coordinator for the bell-ringing and kettle effort in Farmington Hills, Mich.

"That's what brings in most of the money for the Salvation Army to run its year-round charity work," he explains. Yerke is a driver for the area. Sjogren is a coordinator for the Rockford, Ill., area, where his parents pastor a Salvation Army church. McCarthy has worked at Salvation Army camps and community centers. Trumpet player Bram Roberts offers his service in Indianapolis, Ind. Perhaps being committed to such service projects and spending so much energy on the concerns and spiritual well-being of their audience affects the band's view of its own situation.

Whatever the cause, The Insyderz seem content. It's certainly not that they aren't hungry or ambitious as a band; rather, one sees a group of young men that have learned to accept what God has to offer, and to rely on Him. It's a wisdom that sometimes seems beyond the members' years. "God has been faithful to us, and it doesn't matter what a label does or doesn't do, Sjogren explains. "Our faith lies in God, and He is in control of what we do. It would be easy at times to get frustrated in this *wonderful* industry, but there's not really any point to that," he shrugs. "The Insyderz have never been about being famous, or even about spreading the name of *ska*," he continues. "It has been about reaching kids through a style of music they can relate to. It's about being on the same level as those kids, and being able to walk off stage and being able to talk with them. We love ska, but ska was just the medium that Joe and I wanted to use in order to be able to proclaim Christ in the clubs."

Throughout the band's ups and downs, God has been challenging them directly. Says Sjogren, "I think we're being asked, *How high on your priority list is your walk with Me? Where do I rank? Are you going to turn to Me in the good times as well as the bad?* We're learning. We're growing," he acknowledges. "I think it's a maturing process, learning to rely on God to be our all-in-all. That's the theme to the worship album, really. It's about telling God who He is to us, and allowing Him to prove that." 7

Don't miss *This Train.*

A former member of The Alter Boys, Allies, and Rich Mullins' Raggamuffin Band, lead singer/bassist Mark Robertson joins with guitarist Jordan Richter and drummer Cobra Jones to form this year's hippest new band, This Train.

With lyrics that uniquely combine tongue-in-cheek humor and spiritual truth, "Mimes From The Old West" features a sound that ranges from pop/college rock to rockabilly, country, and the blues - giving This Train the most solid tracks around.

Featuring: "A Million Years" (co-written, and with background vocals, by Rich Mullins), "We're Getting Nowhere - Fast," and "Mimes of the Old West"

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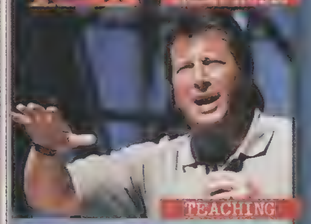

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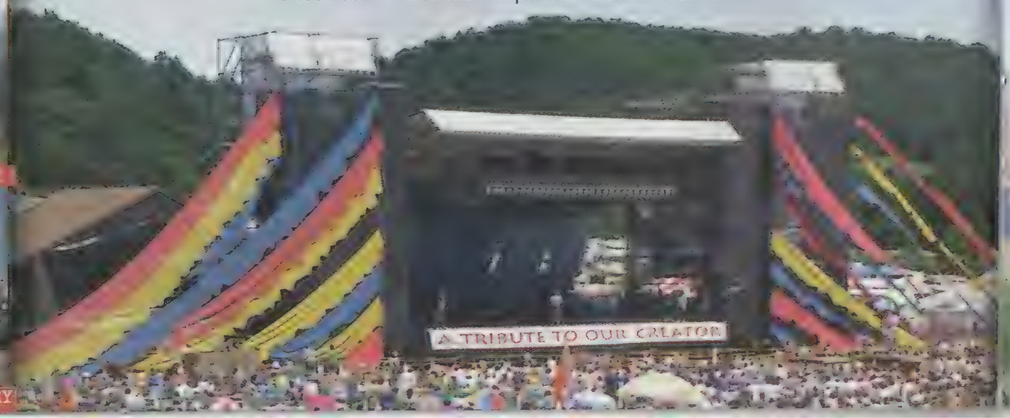

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The original Creation Festival, held annually in Pennsylvania since 1979, has grown to become the largest event of it's type in the world. Creation '98 at the Gorge continues this tradition. The main stage schedule will be the same for both festivals and the complete program will be announced on January 1, 1998.

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big tent revival

"We write about what's on the inside. Right now we want to rock a little bit more. That's what we're into."—Steve Wiggins

by frank chimento

one step ahead of the joneses

The members of BTR are ready to prove, once and for all, they really can rock

Welcome to Nashville, home of pet store turned coffee shop, Fido's. If you're involved in Christian music, this is the place to hobnob ... or so they say. On this gray, cloudy day, the members of Big Tent Revival have come to Fido's to record their liner notes for *Amplifier*, and to discuss life, music and ministry.

Their new record, *Amplifier*, cranks out rock 'n' roll (and ideas) sure to raise some eyebrows. It rocks. The boys in BTR—lead vocalist/guitarist Steve Wiggins, guitarist Randy Williams, drummer Spence Smith, keyboardist David Alan and bassist Rick Heil—haven't completely abandoned the rustic, roots pop that put them on the map. Fans who liked "Two Sets of Joneses" or even the recent "What Would Jesus Do?" won't be left *wholly* empty-handed. But, if you appreciate straight-up rock 'n' roll with serious Jesus lyrics, strap in tight for *Amplifier*. The rules have changed.

Williams isn't afraid of the new sonic direction—after all, people who have seen them live understand the intensity of their music. It's loud and electric. "People tell us they love our live show," he says. "We just wanted to record an album with that intensity."

Wiggins has always been interested in a wider pallet than BTR has been allowed in the past. He was an accomplished high school and collegiate cross-country runner when he sent his demo to ForeFront. They liked the songs, but heard four or five different styles of music and wondered which style was Wiggins'. *Well*, Wiggins responded, *I wrote them all.*

"I think a lot of people don't realize that Big Tent is 'Two Sets of Joneses' and 'If Lovin' God Was a Crime,' but we're other things, as well," the lead singer says. "It's hard to pigeonhole us, because we're such free thinkers musically. We write about what's on the inside. Right now, we want to rock a little bit more. That's what we're into."

For years, people have told BTR their live show is very different from their records. *Amplifier* will definitely change opinions. Big Tent has done the near impossible, pumping in the energy of the live experience without recording a live album.

To match the in-your-face intensity of the music, the themes on *Amplifier* are also powerful and thought-provoking.

"Jimmy" is about a boy Wiggins knew who had a steering wheel on his bicycle. Everyone in town thought Jimmy was nuts because of it. Jimmy got saved at a revival, but the town still never really accepted him. Wiggins laments that the church today doesn't accept kids like Jimmy, who are radically committed to Jesus, but maybe have tattoos and earrings.

"Even worse," he says, "try living in Nashville around the Christian community where everyone is trying to fit in and you just wrote a song called 'What Would Jesus Do?,' and see how they don't accept you."

To placate those skittish about the new BTR sound, *Amplifier* has 15 tracks, but lists only 10. The first 10 push the BTR boundaries, but stay within fan expectations. Then, there's track No. 11 (instead of writing down their liner notes, the members of BTR verbalize them). Everything after that pretty much stomps the boundaries over altogether, from the adrenaline rush of "Real Thing" to the

"For some people, what's on their heart is to be a star and they know that if they say *Jesus* 25 times they'll have a hit single and sell records."

blues-flavored rocker "West Memphis Lawyer."

Easily the toughest cut—musically and lyrically—is the amazing "Rivalry." Dealing severely with those who would judge some Christians artists as holier than others, Wiggins bluntly defends several popular Christian bands and calls Christians to stop feuding.

When writing lyrics, Wiggins doesn't have a philosophy, really. He just loves Jesus with all his heart and knows that from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. "For some people, what's on their heart is to be a star and they know if they say *Jesus* 25 times, they'll have a hit single and sell records," he says. "We say *Jesus* because we love Him and He's on our minds."

Some songs are not as blatant. "Time and Space" sounds like a love song (Oooh, that's a dreaded word in Christian music). "Jesus is desperately in love with us," Wiggins points out. "He's the bridegroom and we're the Bride, so why not sing about that? I'm a Christian and in love with my wife; all these aspects relate back to my passion for Christ."

Of course, some bands invoke the name of Jesus because of pressure from a record label or manager. Wiggins guesses some people assume BTR is bowing to pressure, too, but that is not the case. "Hang around us for a little while—or ask Sparrow records, where I once had a record deal—and you'll see it's not easy to tell us what to do."

It's intriguing to see these guys carry themselves with confidence, yet hearing them speak of pressures. It's like a combination of arrogance and insecurity. The members of BTR know they are a good band, but they're not sure what people will think of *Amplifier.*

Smith suggests it becomes easier to deal with if you live according to God's will. "Performing is easy. An actor can learn the Scriptures and the catch phrases to say about the Bible and Jesus and never actually live what he's saying. Jesus wants us to live our lives according to His will and be ourselves." Of course, he points out, when fans look up to them as role models, there is the pressure to keep each other more accountable.

"It's that whole pleasing-God-versus-pleasing-men thing," Williams says. "This year, I came to a point where I was trying to do all the right things onstage to make people dig my guitar-playing. God has a way of humbling you. Fortunately, I was seeking God and He brought me to a point where I just realized all I have to do is please Him."

Everyone wants to be accepted, Wiggins says, everyone wants to fit in, which also leads to pressure. "I'm sitting here doing this interview and I want to say the cool things," he says. "I want to say all the right things so I don't look like an idiot in your magazine. Maybe I already do."

He laughs humbly. "There are all kinds of pressures, internal and external. Maybe a band member is being influenced by something he shouldn't. Youth pastors bring you to do a show and rent out the big civic center and they couldn't care less about making money. His elders just want to know that 150 kids are going to come down to the altar when

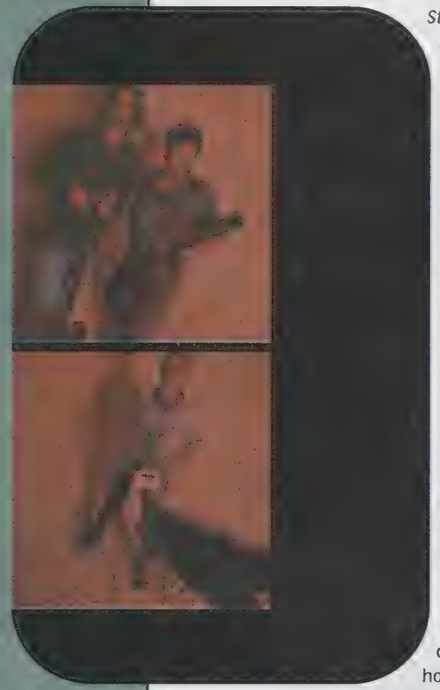
"Try living in Nashville around the Christian community, where everyone is trying to fit in, and you just wrote a song called, 'What Would Jesus Do?' and see how they don't accept you."

BTR GEAR ON *AMPLIFIER*:

STEVE WIGGINS (Acoustic & Rhythm Guitars, Lead Vocals, BGVs)

Steve uses:

Gibson Guitars
ToneSmith Custom Guitars
Omega Custom Acoustic Guitars



RANDY WILLIAMS (Lead & Rhythm Guitars, BGVs)

Randy uses:

Fender Electric Guitars, Amplifiers, and Strings
ToneSmith Custom Guitars
Omega Acoustic Guitars
Jim Dunlop Effects

SPENCE SMITH (Drums & Percussion)

Spence uses:

Pearl Drums
Aquarian Drum Heads
Vater Drum Sticks
Zildjian Cymbals

RICK HEIL (Bass Guitar, BGVs)

Rick uses:

Fender Bass Guitars, Amplifiers, and Strings

DAVID ALAN (Hammond B-3, Wurlitzer EP, Piano, Minimoog, & Mellotron)

David uses:

Oberheim Electronics
Motion Sound Amplifiers

Steve Wiggins says, *Come on down.*

"There is always pressure. That's why Jesus said, *Hey, dude*—and that's what He said—*Hey dude, take my burden, take my yoke ... Steve, come up under this with Me and I'll bear this pressure. All you have to do is be a servant. Serve the people around you and serve Me.* That is where we vacillate back and forth. Are we going to take the world's yoke or Jesus'?"

Williams interrupts with a baffled look on his face: "I feel pressure just trying to use the word *vacillate* in a sentence," he laughs. Then seriously, "We try to do all these things. Every night, the music stops and Steve speaks and presents the Gospel and gives people an opportunity to receive it. Sometimes we have an altar call, sometimes we don't."

As the conversation bounces back and forth, it becomes clear these guys are like an omelette—an organized mess. But it's a good thing. Maybe it has something to do with their pasts: They each have pretty interesting testimonies, having all been saved later in their lives. They feel a special burden for those brought up in the church who never experienced a real, personal relationship with God or change in their life.

"Just because a person walks down an aisle, says a prayer and maybe gets dunked in some water, doesn't necessarily mean their life has changed," Williams says. "Sometimes the experience can be vague or oblique."

"I try not to use *oblique* in a sentence," Wiggins jokes.

BTR is a quirky band. Serious, sarcastic, witty, happy and maybe a little depressed. Dichotomous. It's strange how they agree and disagree with each other in the blink of an eye, all without feelings of disfunction. BTR is tightly tied together.

And they're for real. Real music. Real people. Real ministry. However, they still seem underrated. They sell records and play for tons of people, but it seems they haven't quite broken into the big time. It's amazing BTR doesn't get mentioned in the same breath with Jars of Clay, dc Talk or Audio Adrenaline.

Wiggins isn't worried. BTR is progressing; you can chalk up the earlier stuff to growth experiences. "There are always some things you wish you would have done differently. I'm happy where we are right now. Besides, mature people learn from their mistakes, and we're maturing."

Besides, he points out, most people aren't immediately successful. "I don't know many people who scored perfect on their ACTs, went to Harvard, got a degree and went to work for a law firm. Most people slide through high school, maybe get through college, then wonder what to do with their degree and in the process find God, fall in love, get married and have children. That's when they learn what's important in life. I believe that God has a plan for your life and He wants you to give yourself completely and wholly to Him."

This underappreciated status is evidenced by things like the fact that they've taken heat because they have a bus. One artist was incensed when they pulled into a gig with a huge Columbia House banner strapped to it. She accused them of selling out.

"I have a wife and two kids and I was on the verge of breaking down from being away from my family," Wiggins responds. "They are my first ministry. I had to get home. I had to leave late and get home early. I used to feel so guilty about praying for a tour bus because it seemed like a luxury.

"After breaking down into one of those embarrassing blubbering cries because I missed my family, I cried out to God and, dude, one day Columbia

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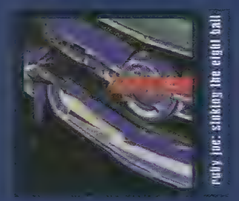

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quayle: self titled

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SUBLIME RECORDS

What Would Jesus Do? Changing the World—One Question at a Time

One of the key tracks on Big Tent Revival's latest, *Amplifier,* is "What Would Jesus Do?" Written as an anthem for some 14 million young people wearing *WWJD* bracelets, the song originally appeared as the title track on the special album *WWJD.*

"When I hear people ask what Jesus would do, I think about what He *did*," BTR lead vocalist Steve Wiggins writes in the liner notes. "He gave himself completely even to the grave, and He's alive today making petition for us even as you read this. He's your Lord and He's *still* serving you right now! If you want to follow Him, give yourself completely to Him. In doing so, you will become a servant to those around you."

WWJD is built around a basic question: "What would Jesus do?" If every person asked that question with each decision, the world would be changed for the better, one question at a time.

The movement is credited to a youth group at Calvary Reformed Church in Holland, Mich. As they considered how to effect their culture, they studied the Charles Sheldon book *In His Steps*, written in 1896.

In the novel, a bum in rags disrupts the status quo in a Midwestern church service. His repeated pleas for help are disregarded by the townspeople, so when they come to church, well-dressed and reverent, the bum rocks their world: "It seems to me an awful lot of trouble in the world somehow wouldn't exist if all the people who sing such songs went and lived them out." With that, he died. The congregation was stunned, and pledged to live their lives for one year asking themselves one question—"What would Jesus do?"

The story haunted the Holland youth group. They too pledged to ask, "What would Jesus do?" To remind themselves tangibly, they found someone to make woven bracelets bearing four letters—W.W.J.D. The bracelets led to many questions from friends, classmates and parents.

Soon, the community was wearing the bracelets. It spread from there. The manufacturer released the bracelets nationwide, and the movement quickly grew to national proportions. Today, more than 14 million bracelets have been sold.

WWJD stands in stark contrast to the "Just do it" mentality of advertisers, encouraging kids to enjoy life with no moral boundaries—justifying selfish passions as freedom of choice. Since the movement's simple beginnings, several resources have been developed to help followers understand and apply the principles from the Bible. These tools include *The NIV Youth Walk* devotional Bible, the *WWJD Spiritual Challenge Journal* (by Mike Yaconelli), and the *WWJD Interactive Devotional* (by Dana Key). Each utilize the WWJD concept to point readers to the answers for life's tough choices.

The soundtrack for the movement includes the BTR song and a new Skillet track, plus recurrents from several popular Christian artists (from modern pop artists Sarah Masen and Smalltown Poets to mega-artists Steven Curtis Chapman and dc Talk). The booklet includes special notes expounding on each song, written by the artists themselves.

The CD includes two bonuses—a special WWJD bracelet in the jewel box's spine, and (score!) the *NIV Bible,* plus *The NIV Bible Library* and *The Mac Bible* on CD-ROM.

For the *WWJD Interactive Devotional,* Key compiled comments from the artists on the album, adding his own insights to address topics about one's words, attitudes, and actions in life's daily challenges. For the *WWJD Spiritual Challenge Journal,* Yaconelli leads students on a 30-day adventure in a self-discovery journalizing adventure.

The two combine to provide a good one-two supplement for those committed to discovering what Jesus asks his followers to do in response to choices presented, each book pointing the readers to the Bible. "The Bible is the Christian's map for this revolution," Key says. "What good commander would enter the battle without his reconnaissance? The idea in *WWJD* is to not only ask the question but, moreover, get the answer. The books are tools to help people discover biblical truths for themselves. Then they, too, know the lay of the land—the location of the pitfalls and minefields."

House offered to put a banner on our bus and give us money for it and it bought us our bus. You can't mock God's provision."

Sometimes, however, people get onstage, claim God told them they need a bus, and pass around a chicken bucket. The members of BTR, fed up with so much sensationalism that happens in the name of Christ, take the Gospel seriously and have a burden to share it.

"You have to guarantee that a certain amount of kids get caught up in the emotional hype at these Jesus pep rallies, and that's sad," Wiggins says. "But it is encouraging to be at rallies like Teen Mania and Hot Hearts and meet people who are like *freaks*—not in a bad way—they're just on fire."

The members of the band expect a huge revival soon and believe it's going to happen through the youth. The guys believe it is human nature for kids to rebel—but these kids are going to rebel against drugs, violence and immorality. "Kids are going to rebel against culture, and their parents, when it's the parents who live immorally," Wiggins says. "Kids will find Jesus in a powerful way."

In college, Wiggins wrote an

Lloyd

thoughts from a driveway

ORGANIC RECORDS

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essay right after he became a Christian. The essay, "Modern Day Rebel," was about what would happen if there was no more "counter-culture." He says, "It sounds like a DeGarmo and Key song, but if I'm going to be a rebel, I'm going to be a rebel for Jesus Christ."

"Kids don't want to play games with their life," Alan adds. "They want to be a part of something. Thankfully, there are some people reaching these teens and hitting them right in the face and not beating around the bush. They're saying things like, *Hey, this is what's really going on and you know it, so stop playing games.*"

It is a no-holds-barred approach when it comes to Big Tent. If you think Wiggins is obnoxious about his faith now, he says, you should have seen him when he first got saved. He would actually *search* for ways to be obnoxious about the Gospel. He once approached someone wearing a Ratt T-shirt and told him that band was of the Devil. "Yeah, I was a freak like that."

Although his approach has become more sophisticated in the time since, Wiggins and company still rock the flock on record and onstage. BTR will be taking *Amplifier* all over the country and at the major festivals this summer. Who knows? Maybe BTR will give you a ride. "You think we took flack from having a bus with a banner on it, wait 'til this year," Wiggins says. "Columbia House is buying us this car made by Honda called a Bay car. It's a little two-seater and fits under the bay of your bus. We're just going to cruise around the festivals, looking for people like Jimmy." 7

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tourniquet

"Our aim with the lyrics has never been to confuse people," clarifies Kirkpatrick. "It was never a gimmick for me to write those kinds of songs; it was always just what was interesting to me at the time."

by Dan MacIntosh

It's a rainy January night in the beach community of Santa Monica, Calif. Both drummer Ted Kirkpatrick and guitarist Aaron Guerra duck into a seafood restaurant to discuss Tourniquet. The guys are observably in good spirits this night, despite the rain, because this veteran band has just released its first album in more than three years, *Crawl to China.*

It would actually take a flotation device to get from here to China—Santa Monica is the spot where the historic Route 66 comes to rest at the beachfront sands of the West. It's also the locale Kirkpatrick calls home, though a long way from his Wisconsin birthplace.

Kirkpatrick sheds his raincoat to reveal a green and gold Green Bay Packers jersey with its distinctive No. 4. Kirkpatrick's love of the hometown team, his heavy cheese-country accent, and his rural hospitality reveals that he certainly isn't affected by the southern California fast lane he lives in.

Crawl To China, the group's Benson debut, is probably their first album that doesn't require a medical dictionary to understand the lyrics. While the use of complicated words distinguished Tourniquet from the usual cavemen grunts and growls of the hard rock world, it is a tactic of the past.

"I like to see a band progress in a way that feels comfortable to them," Kirkpatrick says. "I mean, there's still things on *Crawl to China* that people have questions about. We still use a lot of allegory. Songs like 'Enveloped in Python' or 'Tell-Tale Heart' are very allegorical.

"Then there are the *Tourniquet* words, like *Claustrospelunker,* which isn't even a word. It's kind of two words thrown together."

Yet, there are also songs which are straightforward, such as the title track's message about doing God's will, or the ballad "If I Was There," which describes Christ's ordeal on the cross.

"Our aim with the lyrics has never been to confuse people," clarifies Kirkpatrick. "Anybody can sit there and pick up a dictionary or *Gray's Anatomy* and say, *Oh, this word sounds cool,* or, *Let's do this.* This never had anything to do with the songs I wrote in the past. I have a background in pharmaceutical sales: It was never a gimmick for me to write those kinds of songs; it was always just what was interesting to me at the time."

The new album's lyrical variety comes from all three members of the band. For example, Guerra and singer Luke Easter wrote three songs (many of the ideas were from before Guerra was even in Tourniquet). This influx of fresh ideas has reinvigorated the band.

These are great days for fans of Tourniquet: Not only is there a new album, but all of its classic releases will be reissued by KMG, the new owners of Frontline Records. "It's a big compliment that when Frontline re-formed, of the hundreds of bands they had, they chose to re-release every Tourniquet product they had," Kirkpatrick says. "That's obviously a direct result of people still appreciating—and even more so now—what we do. It makes us feel good."

God must truly have His hand on the members of Tourniquet; a recent trip to Holland further proves this point. "We had a miracle occur—there's no other word to describe it—just a few weeks ago in Holland," Kirkpatrick says.

The band had just finished some shows in Germany. Kirkpatrick told the other members of the band the upcoming shows in Holland would either be great, awful, or "otherwise." They turned out to be awfully nonexistent. What should have been six shows ended up as zero; the band spent a week in Holland owing for a hotel, with no resources to pay for it. With the exception of a last-minute acoustic opening slot for Petra, Tourniquet would not have performed at all during its whole Holland swing.

"This promoter had not stuck legally, ethically, spiritually, or morally to anything he had said he would do," Kirkpatrick recounts with great disappointment. "We had to leave the next night and fly back to L.A. We said, *You obviously do not care enough about us to have kept your word, and we've lost all this money."*

Kirkpatrick went to another table to write out an agreement that the promoter needed to sign, promising to reimburse the band. At the other table, something otherworldly began to happen. "I felt this kind of a warm breeze on my back, and the next thing I know, there was a man standing next to me. He said, *I don't know why I'm standing here, but I was told to come over here and talk to you.* I said, *Oh, OK.* I was really busy, and normally I would have said that I was really busy, but for some reason I kept listening.

"And he said, *I was sitting there eating my dinner, and it was like I was sitting on somebody's lap, and they stood up. And I had no choice but to stand up.* And he said, *I felt an anointing to come over here and talk to you."*

After confirming this man was a Christian, also from the States, he asked Kirkpatrick if he was in "some trouble." Kirkpatrick recounted the group's tale of woe over losing out on $6,100.

The man proceeded to invite Tourniquet to Pittsburgh for a concert, before really blowing their minds: "So he says, *I'll tell you what: Call it year-end tithing, but I know this is what I'm supposed to do. I'm going to FedEx you a check for $6,100.* He said, *Your band must being doing something right.* He said, *I've never felt this before. I've never done this before."*

Later, this same man, who had never even heard of the band or its music, paid its $2,000 hotel bill with a credit card. When they returned home, the miraculous monetary gift arrived, just as promised.

Indeed, Tourniquet was doing something right. They were right where the Lord wanted them to be, and were blessed for it. They didn't even have to crawl all the way to China. 7

Chris Taylor

With the release of *Down Goes the Day*, his solo debut on Rhythm House Records, singer/songwriter Chris Taylor is a new artist to many people. In reality, he has been involved in the Christian music scene for several years, as the frontman for the now defunct modern rock band Love Coma. Long considered a critical favorite, Love Coma broke up last year after their record company fell on hard times and the band members decided to pursue other interests.

The band's dissolution allowed Taylor to take a step back and reevaluate himself, his art and just what he was trying to accomplish. "I did yard work while doing a lot of brainstorming and finding out what it is I wanted," Taylor says. "There was a lot of prayer time. I invested my time in church, doing all of the *typical* Christian things—for the first time in my life, I think. I just really focused on God."

Due to his negative experiences with the music industry, Taylor wasn't anxious to sign another record deal, although he had been in discussions with a large label. But when San Antonio-based Rhythm House Records approached him, things seemed to fall into place. "God's timing was perfect," Taylor says. "Rhythm House is a small, kind of grass-roots label with a strong foundation. The owner is my dad's friend, Elliot Cunningham. Elliot called and sent me a contract and it was too good of a deal to turn down. And it spoke to me personally—Elliot is very in touch with where I am musically and where I'm at spiritually and it just seemed like it was the right thing to do. I look back on it now and have a peace about it. It's nice to know that you don't always have to do things in a huge way. You can do them in small ways and have a greater effect."

When it came time to write songs for this project, Taylor considered long and hard what he wanted to say. Looking over the struggles of the last few years, it would have been easy to write songs that were dark. "I had the choice of either writing bitter, sarcastic songs," he explains, "or songs that have a lot of hope, truth and joy in them, which is what I wanted to do. But those are always harder for me to come by. I feel like the time spent in Monday night Bible studies at a friend's house, and dedicating myself to be involved in the church, helped make the decision to be positive much easier for me, and gave me good songs to balance out the obvious ones to write."

> "I had the choice of either writing bitter, sarcastic songs, or songs that have a lot of hope, truth and joy in them, which is what I wanted to do. But those are always harder for me to come by."

Taylor regards *Down Goes The Day* as an attempt to convey the lessons he learned over the last year. "I don't think that I was trying to make one grand statement," he says. "With the Love Coma stuff I was always trying to make one major statement that all of the songs were trying to say. If this record has a theme, it's about standing back and just taking in the glory of God. I want to sing about joy, and I want to sing about God in a real obvious, great way that makes me feel like I'm spreading the truth and actually doing something that's worth doing night after night."

He doesn't claim that the music is easy listening, though. "There are some really hard things to hear," Taylor says. "The song 'Jesus Is Alive' basically comes out and talks to the body of Christ about not doing their job—about not being the body of Christ at all times and that's a hard thing to hear. It's not like a *me vs. them* thing, it's definitely an *us*. The only way that people are going to know that Jesus is alive is if we show it. That was a slap in my face, something that sparked in my head, and I hope it's going to wake some other people up too."

The experience of recording with seasoned session players as opposed to the bandmates he knew so well was a challenge for Taylor, but one he feels he met successfully. "I was really nervous about that whole aspect—using people who don't know me and I don't know. There were certain things I heard in my head, that I knew I wanted on the record, certain really subtle moods and dynamics I wanted to convey. A good challenge for any musician to have is to not hold on to something so tight you can't enjoy the spontaneous things that can happen in the studio—not try to have too much control over the music and stuff. For the most part, I think I was able to let go just enough. And all of the players did a beautiful job."

—*Beth Blinn*

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Quayle

There's probably nothing more universal than a broken heart. One finds the scars of love in every race, creed and color, and in every nation. They're even found among those who call themselves Christians.

The band Quayle is made up of four committed Christians: Nick Garrisi handles vocals and guitar, Javier Hernandez takes care of the lead guitar, Kevin Pollard is the drummer, and William (Billy) Coker plays bass.

I met with all but Pollard recently at the group's home church in La Habra, Calif., which is in the Northern part of Orange County (and is also the home of this writer's high school alma mater—Sonora High School, home of the mighty Raiders). But that's probably another story, and not at all related to the fine music of Quayle.

The church is a converted grocery store in a strip mall which still has a liquor store sitting between the sanctuary at one end and a Christian coffee shop at the other side. We sat down to talk at the coffee shop.

The group's new self-titled album on Sub·Lime is highlighted by the raspy but inviting vocals of Garrisi, and set to the tight and together playing of the band. Produced by the suddenly busy-behind-the-boards Mike Knott, this album finally brings out the energy of this talented band's live sound.

Garrisi has had his heart broken a time or two, but he's not really uncomfortable with putting these raw and real feelings into recorded songs. "A lot of times, I want kids to relate," explains Garrisi. "And I know a lot of them have gone through a lot more than I have. I'm not going to beat around the bush and stuff. I just wrote the songs."

"Stay Away" is one such song, and its gut level honesty is often hard to listen to, because for those who have had their hearts broken, its truth stings. It captures the point in a relationship where one partner has decided that it's better for the couple to just stay apart. *What d'you say/why don't you stay away/wait up what d'you say/you want to stay away.*

The next song describes the kind of girl who would ask a guy to stay away. Called "Leave Boys," it contains the telling line, *she leaves boys and walks on them.* This doesn't exactly sound like the chapter on love in 1st Corinthians, does it? It's often hard to know why God puts us in situations where we get our hearts broken. Sometimes, we put ourselves in those situations, and it's only afterwards that we realize we were in the wrong place at the wrong time with the wrong person.

"What I learned probably the most was to listen to God's voice when I could hear it completely, but I would just ignore it," Garrisi admits.

These struggles give the listener mixed feelings: One feels badly for Garrisi's troubles, but it sure makes for some great rock 'n' roll.

—Dan MacIntosh

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The Channelsurfers

"We need to keep perspective here and not let the sensibilities of pop culture dictate how we think and live our lives," Tim Bushong says. "That's got to be by God's revelation."

Bushong and The Channelsurfers are not against pop culture, mind you. As found on their Organic debut, *Tunnel Vision*, they are simply four men who understand you can't base your life on TV, music and movies. That would give one a distorted view of life, and a shallow basis for which to live it.

Bushong (guitarist, trombonist, and bgv's) was formerly in the band LoveWar (which bears no musical resemblance to The Channelsurfers). For a time, bassist Jon and drummer Lance Hill toured with Bushong under the LoveWar banner.

Despite the LoveWar connection, The Channelsurfers have their own distinct sound and personality. Their music is a gumbo that includes heavy rock and funk, and even bits of reggae and jazz.

The recording process for *Tunnel Vision* was a bit out of the ordinary, too. "We signed the deal with Organic the Tuesday after Cornerstone and were recording in NashVegas on Thursday!" With Bushong serving as producer, they cut the drums, bass and one guitar in three days. They recorded everything else at his Indiana home studio. Then they dumped those tapes back onto the 32-track and mixed everything in Nashville. The end result contained the best of both worlds ("The great initial sounds of a Neve console with the funky vibe of a home demo!").

Part of the band vibe can be attributed to Lance, who suggested they perform more groove-oriented songs. The songs were written by the band through free-style jamming. They came up with riffs and basic sounds, until they had a basic arrangement they liked. After that, the song went under the microscope until it was exactly what the band wanted.

Jason Brown, the band's original lead singer, recorded on *Tunnel Vision*. However, due to his hectic schedule as a youth pastor, Brown couldn't stay with the band—but he did help them find his replacement, Aaron Scantlen. "He's 20, a great musician, and we just played our maiden gig with him," Bushong says. "He was killer. We're gonna miss Jay, but he's doing what God has called him to do."

The Channelsurfers see ministry as a part of the picture, but are careful about labeling themselves a "ministry band." They never shy away from their faith (Brown belts out *God is right/ I was wrong* several times on "So Far Away"); but, in a club setting, they don't push the issue from stage.

However, people often ask if they are a Christian band. Jon expresses that ministry and worship should not be separate compartments from the rest of our lives. Bushong points out, "Worship is more than what you do in church on Sundays. Real spirituality is anything you do—except for sin—under the lordship of Christ, to the glory of God alone. Wrestling with my kids is spiritual!"

Of course, playing clubs means they find themselves in pretty weird shows. Once, they performed with a band who—for half an hour—played a recording of William S. Burroughs' poetry. "It was what the band was into," Bushong says, "but it was boring."

As the band tours through May with Reality Check, their goal is to improve as a band. Bushong says they want to explore new ground without losing their distinctive sound. "We're all thankful that we are able to do this, to play and record," he says, adding that they consider it an issue of stewardship. "We're not allowed to just settle for, *Oh, that'll do*," he says. "Everyone has different areas of skill and calling. We're called to play our music with fun and passion and present a solid Christian world view through music, lifestyle and words."

Joking, he adds, "That, or we just wanna be filthy rich and eat everything we want and not get fat."

—Thom Gladhill

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Send The Beggar

Send the Beggar guitarist Chris Anthony wants you to know two crucially important things about his band: "We're not ska. And we're not punk."

That settled, vocalist Matt Bentley stresses the band mostly wants to be looked at as being honest and from the heart. "We want to reach our peers."

It's rare to find a debut album which reveals a literate and mature sounding band from the get-go. But Send The Beggar is just such a band. This five-piece group expresses itself with gut-wrenching lyrics, finely layered and orchestrated musical backdrops, and songs which leave a permanent impression with the listener.

Send The Beggar began as a church praise and worship team, but the congregation encouraged them to become something more than just local heroes. Listening to their music, one can hear many different musical influences (including Ben Folds Five, U2 and Toad The Wet Sprocket) without Send the Beggar sounding like any particular one. They successfully assimilate the sounds of their favorite artists, in order to bring to the table a unique artistic perspective.

"We seem to really appeal to the high school to college age crowd," Bentley says. "I think we have a wide range of songs that can appeal to any age, really. I'm excited to see where it goes."

Anthony, Bentley, Chris Freeman (guitar), Brett Fitzer (drums) and Matt 'Wootie' Wooten (bass) take their name from Luke 16:19-31.

"A beggar sat outside a rich man's gate," Bentley explains. "When the two of them died, the beggar, who had nothing by the world's standards, went to Heaven and the rich man went to Hell. The rich man wanted to be able to send the beggar back to help warn his brothers about their sin. It seemed cool to us that he saw his wrong ways and wanted to warn his brothers. We want to be [the] beggar [returning] to the world."

Also the lyricist, Freeman's personal story of discovering the joys of music is a good example of how Send The Beggar looks at God's hand on its ministry. "My dad played the guitar, and my grandfather played the guitar, and I always had tons of acoustics around the house," he remembers. "When I was 13, I just picked it up, and I just liked it a lot. I started writing songs. Then I started playing in the praise and worship band at church."

And, Freeman continues, whenever you give your time and energy to a ministry, the Lord always multiplies it. "I know I wouldn't be half the player or writer—this band wouldn't exist—if God wouldn't have used us and taught us a lot of lessons when we were in the praise and worship band."

The lessons learned, Send The Beggar has translated these experiences into music which artfully passes along its accumulated wisdom. The album closes with "Prodigal," which tells one of the all-time best Bible stories about a man who has learned from his mistakes: *The blessings that You gave me/ I've squandered every one/ I'm falling down on my knees/ Your Prodigal son.*

In a sense, this is the story of every Christian's life. Send The Beggar reminds us that God is always there for us to return every blessing we might foolishly squander, and to remind us that we are always His children.

—Thompson Ridings-Brooks

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Jesus Music

Steve Morgan calls his band Jesus Music, which he has every right to do. You see, Morgan is probably old enough to remember when the music we now call *contemporary Christian music* came labeled with the words "File Under Jesus Music."

Jesus Music may have an old-school name, but they certainly don't have a dated sound. On their Organic debut, *3-D*, they touch on everything from punk-styled anthems to club-ready dance-pop, with a touch of *Partridge Family*-psychedelic-retro thrown in for good measure. Morgan has witnessed a lot of musical eras—and lived to tell the tale. "What I listen to is based on kind of the mood, the time, and the place," he explains.

Morgan splits his time between making music and making surfboards in Hawaii. He and wife Donna are the Hawaiian residents of the group, while guitarist Mike Acevedo and vocalist Michelle Higgins reside in Nashville.

Morgan is clearly the rocker of the band's two main musical architects, having survived the guitar-dominated New Wave scene of southern California. Producer Sal Salvador (exalted by Morgan to kind of a fifth member) is the primary engineer of Jesus Music's disco elements. Somehow, these two find enough middle ground to put together one fun modern pop platter.

Morgan was raised Catholic, but fell away from the faith. After being struck by a serious bout of double pneumonia, which left him ready to try anything, he turned to Christ. He soon found himself at a Nashville Bible study, where he met Acevedo and Higgins.

3-D contains an unlikely cover of the old rebel rock song "Born To Be Wild." Though it's common to hear musicians cover "secular" songs, few would think *this* one could be used in a Christian context. But Morgan thinks today's music listeners will interpret this song in a much different way than older generations did. Kids today probably don't even associate this song with drug-induced motorcycle thugs, as in the movie *Easy Rider*—assuming they've even seen the film.

"Before we recorded that song," Morgan recounts, "we used to play that song live and it just seemed to be sort of a fun song to play. I asked kids and young adults under the age of 20 their definition of *wild* and their impression of the song. The definition was always positive. *Wild* means *to get excited*, to get totally pumped up about something."

On the album, the group quotes Galations 4:18 to complement the lyrics for this song: *But it is good to be zealous in a good thing always.* Nobody can fault Jesus Music for not being zealous enough. It's almost as if they were born to be wild.

—Dan MacIntosh

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Reviews

TRAGEDY ANN

Lesser

Organic

The first track of *Lesser* says it all. From the opening waves of feedback and the chunka-chunka of hard rock guitars to the impatient lyrics (which tell the listener, *Without Jesus, you just don't get it)*, you figure out very quickly Tragedy Ann is here to rock, and rock for Jesus. With a pedigree that includes Seattle hard rock band Sometime Sunday, though, that means the sonic and evangelical wallop of *Lesser* is a veritable force of nature.

It's also clear that *Lesser*, as the title suggests, is about humility. From the junkyard album art to the tales of woe outside of Christ to the satirical jabs at Christian bands who try to hide their Christianity, everything on *Lesser* is focused on the truth of this fallen world—we are weak, but He is strong.

The protagonist of "Siren 2" helplessly laments the pain of a friend, yet promises hope (*Don't look to me/ I can't help you/ I can only watch Him work inside of you*); "Little One" rejoices in the faith of a small child (*She's only three butshe knows You so different from me/ I want to live like this child Lord*); "Waste," wrapped in metal and even a bit of groove, is an anthem that reaches out to the lost with complete empathy. Songs like "King" and "Is It Okay" are directed at Christians—the former to those who might think Tragedy Ann are "too" Christian, the second to those who might judge Tragedy Ann as not Christian enough.

"I Know" takes the music down a notch (well, intermittently) and is as pointed an altar call as they come (*All that I desire is to see that you find truth/ And that you know that He is always there for you*). That, plus the example set in "Seek" (*It's You that I need/ I will only suffer/ When I lead*), make the Gospel message plain enough for the most difficult listener.

What's refreshing is Tragedy Ann rocks with an abandon that's seemed lost in the music scene. Drummer Bob Sable and bassist Dave Bosley create a sturdy platform for the wailing and gnashing guitars of Erik Whittington and Mikee Bridges. However, while there are occasional flourishes from the guitar section, for the most part this is working man's rock 'n' roll. Bridges' almost atonal vocals make him an everyman, bringing the realistic emotions to the front of every song.

No pretty glamour boys here. No flowery lyrics. Just the meat and potatoes. *Lesser* is the statement of a band who wants their message to be so simple it can be understood at any decibel level.

For some, the simple sweat-and-noise-and-Gospel will make Tragedy Ann seem unworthy of their notice. Somehow, I don't think the members of Tragedy Ann care whether you like them or not. They're here to rock, and rock for Jesus. Sometimes that's all that matters.

—*Chris Well*

BON VOYAGE

Bon Voyage

BEC

The debut record from Starflyer-guy Jason Martin and wife Julie opens inauspiciously enough with the fuzzy, indirect pop of "Honeymoon," a bubblegum number about going out on a Saturday night. It neither captures the attention nor refuses it, but chugs along dutifully through its three minutes, ending in a swell of keyboards provided by producer and Adam Again frontman Gene Eugene.

Then the real fireworks start. The Martins (joined by a rhythm section credited only as Travis and Matt) officially begin their pop double fantasy with "Kiss My Lips," a sensuous, slithery number that teases (Julie's breathy "Come on, baby, kiss my lips") before erupting into the wall of guitar Jason

Martin is known for. From that second on, Bon Voyage spins a confectionary web of pure pop bliss that is relentlessly infectious and hummable.

Though admittedly lighter in content than Martin's work with Starflyer 59, *Bon Voyage* contains many of the ingredients that make Starflyer successful, honed to fit the decidedly poppy parameters. "You Got It, I Want It" is propelled by thick, sludgy chords and "I Just Wanna (Be With You)" treads the same sparkle-ballad territory as some of Starflyer's moodier work.

What is most evident is the unwavering dedication to melody. "Together" glides dreamily along, Julie's wispy promise of "We'll always be together" floating like mist over Eugene's Beatle-esque keyboard and Jason's plaintive acoustic strum. "No Paradise" could be an outtake from *Twin Peaks* torch singer Julee Cruse, with its morose theme ("sometimes this life's no paradise") and sporadic surges of keyboard.

Even within the self-imposed structures of melodic pop, Jason Martin flirts with brilliance. "You're Wonderful," whose melancholy slide guitar recalls Daniel Amos' "Divine Instant," is a 21st Century surf ballad that builds to a satisfying rush of guitar and drums. Julie's voice is perfectly suited to the music, one moment managing a coy playfulness, the next sounding almost matronly ("lift up your head, it's alright"). Eugene's keyboard adds entire dimensions to the compositions, and the rhythm section (which periodically alternates with a vintage drum machine) provides a solid undergirding.

As principal songwriter, it is on the shoulders of Jason Martin that the burden rests. The song structures on *Bon Voyage* demonstrate a depth and grasp of melody only hinted at before, and indicate the presence of a band with a strong future. Should Julie's promise of "We'll always be together" prove true, it will be to the great benefit of the listener.

—*J. Edward Keyes*

BLINDSIDE

Blindside

Solid State

When you think of music from Sweden, chances are the first thing that springs to mind is the bubbly, bouncy, disco-pop of ABBA, Ace of Base or the Cardigans (not coincidentally, all bands fronted by attractive, blond females). Swedish metal band Blindside is set to change that.

Vocalist Christian Lindskog displays a wide vocal range, frequently going from singing a fractured melody to a full-voiced scream. Simon Grenehed provides the emotional undercurrent with his ragged guitar. From the haunting loop on "Liberty" to the sloppy rhythm and

Reviews

raging, feedback-drenched leads on "Born," Grenehed's noise-laden guitar provides the perfect framework for Lindskog's emotion-worn vocals.

As hard as the music is, the lyrics hit even harder, searching out the grace to do God's will in a fallen world, or as Lindskog sings in "Invert": *Ouch, want to go mainstream just like them/ God help me go bolder/ I know I'm not/ and I forgot/ that I am not the one/ who is going to get things done.*

In a genre not known for originality, Blindside mixes up the hardcore tag with emo, punk, an occasional dash of hip-hop, and big metal riffs for a sound that is as enthralling as it is explosive.

—Brad Caviness

CLOUD2 GROUND

e-majn

N·Soul

Techno may have lost out to punk and ska as the genre of choice for post-grunge alternative rock fans. However, that hasn't stopped many techno artists from pushing the artistic limits and exploring new territory (in spite of being ignored by the mainstream). *E-majn,* for instance, by Oklahoma City's Cloud2Ground, covers a wide array of styles, diverging greatly from simple "dance music," while the use of electronics provides the common thread that holds the record together.

A great example of the disc's diversity can be found in the two versions of "Raindown"—the first version ("Raw Piano Dub") kicks off the record with a simple, elegant piano track wrapped in ambient sound effects; the second version ("Original Break Mix") redresses the melody in a fast-paced, high energy dance track.

Other tracks, like "Away" and "F5," build on the typically spartan, sample-based arrangements of most electronic tracks with lush, cinematic arrangements that focus on melody and composition. "Been Away" and "Face 2 Face" add vocals and a keen Brit-pop influence, making them the most radio-friendly tracks on the disc.

C2G wears its influences on its sleeve, particularly from artists like Moby and Future Sound of London. They lack the rock influence that has helped push groups like Prodigy, Chemical Brothers and (again) Moby into the mainstream, but the strength of their songwriting and arrangements on *e-majn* truly make Cloud2Ground stand apart from the crowd.

—Brad Caviness

ROOM FULL OF WALTERS

Sleepy-Head

Word

Jeffrey Dahmer was a mass murderer: What happens when a killer confesses before Christ? Now, what happens when a band sings a song called "Jeffrey Dahmer Went To Heaven"?

Once you dig into the words of the song, you discover something quite profound. Unfortunately, some might assume it's a bid for shock value and pass on the record altogether. *Sleepy-Head,* the major label debut from Room Full of Walters, is full of songs with solid lyrics, hooks and that solid rock 'n' roll sound kids love.

There is a certain sound that has been popular amongst midwestern college rock bands for a long time, and Room Full of Walters do it well. *Sleepy-Head* is actually their fourth release, and by far their best, although I'm surprised they didn't re-record a couple of these tracks with some new tunes because the production is a little weak.

The disc starts off with "Home," one of the strongest cuts, with its quirky '80's-style rock *a la* Weezer and Summercamp. Fun guitars reminiscent of The Cars weave in and out of each song, really standing out in "Laughing At the Ground" and "Pete's a Rocket Scientist."

There are no keyboards, strings or samples and very few horns, but the guitars are so melodic and pop-oriented, you won't notice. The lyrics throughout the record are strong when the band isn't trying too hard to be clever, a trap most young bands fall into.

The music rocks, with melodies that stick in your head, propelling lyrics that are sometimes quite inventive. Listening to *Sleepy-Head* by Room Full of Walters makes me long for two things: 1) to see the band live; 2) their next record.

—Dr. Tony Shore

THE LATE, LATE SERVICE

Dry Bones Dancing

Maranatha!

Maranatha!, known for praise and worship music, appeals to a new generation with Late Late Service, giving praise and worship an edgy, guitar-driven sound. Produced by Chris Lizotte, Peter Shambrook and Shawn Tubbs, *Dry Bones Dancing* includes

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several weighty talents—including Tim Taber, formerly of Prayer Chain, as well as vocal turns from the producers—who tailor the music for youth services and gatherings.

The easy-paced "I See The Lord" features the raspy vocals of Chris Lizotte. Following is the song he wrote, "I'm In Need Of You," showcasing the gentle female vocals of Jaime Eichler. She returns later with the duet "The Solid Rock," the only new arrangement to a classic song (*On Christ the solid rock I stand/ All other ground is sinking sand*). The song is simply laced with acoustic guitar and melodic accordion, the similar threads throughout most of the arrangements.

Energy picks up with "Hosanna In The Highest," featuring the enthusiastic vocals of Todd Warren. The album closer, "He Knows My Name," is accentuated with bongos.

The album's centerpiece, "Prepare the Way," seems to be the combined effort of Late Late Service, declaring their message: *Where is the voice of our generation?/ In spite of our faults/ We come to the kingdom/ For such a time.*

The album is full of new songs with lyrically simple truths proudly modeling an edgy, yet intimate sound. *Dry Bones Dance* is a quality selection of worship songs for those ready to praise with a new song.

—Cara Baker

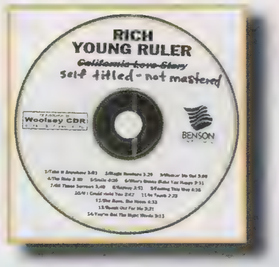
RICH YOUNG RULER

Rich Young Ruler

Benson

For their debut, Rich Young Ruler richly demonstrates the sounds which dominated the airwaves back when groups like The Beach Boys, America, and The Byrds ruled the music world. There probably hasn't been a "magical" album like this since Randy Stonehill's *Wonderama* (which makes sense, when you consider that both albums were produced by Terry Taylor). And the only magical land where one can both catch the perfect wave, and connect on the most goosebump-inducing vocal harmony, is where mankind is finally united with the heavenly Father. Or as they say in the song "Take It Anywhere," *It's a good time to leave the world behind.* In other words, much of the music here can best be described as little moments of Heaven.

The music of Rich Young Ruler contrasts so beautifully with much of the angst-ridden primal scream therapy of modern rock. Harmonies float by like angelic descendants of Brian Wilson's imagination; guitars jingle-jangle with McGuinn-esque regularity, and the songs retain an otherworldly innocence last witnessed on planet Earth in the charts of '70s AM top 40 radio.



Of course, Rich Young Ruler hasn't completely abandoned the cares of this world, since many of these songs address the pain of romantic heartbreak. It's the kind of album which may cause other land-locked groups to chill green with envy, and longingly wish they all could be California bands.

—Dan MacIntosh

OUTER CIRCLE

Outer Circle

Tooth & Nail

As if a full-time schedule with one band wasn't enough, Stavesacre's Mark Saloman offers *Outer Circle*, a new side project (with a new group of musicians) that takes a new look at Saloman's old school punk roots.

Where Stavesacre melds elements of

punk, alternative and hard rock, Outer Circle plays pure, unadulterated, no-frills, a-four-count-and-three-chords punk rock. Indeed *Outer Circle* rarely deviates from this bare-bones approach. There are no guitar solos, only a couple of extended "verses" to introduce songs, and the album's 11 songs all fit in a quick 28 minutes. But the simplicity of the music puts Saloman's voice squarely in the spotlight. His vocals make the record interesting and his words give it depth.

Compared to Saloman's lyrics, the music is deceptively simplistic. It's tempting to dismiss the whole thing as a quickly cobbled-together one-off. On closer inspection, Saloman's "outer circle" clearly represents those without power, who are not in the "inner circle" of politics, religion and business.

The lyrics ruminate on the meaning of the Psalms, the Beatitudes, and Paul's "peace that passes understanding" cast through the frustration of modern urban life. Saloman's trademarked double-tracked vocals (one of the few production frills present on the record) wrings every drop of emotion out of the songs.

It is appropriate Saloman picked old-school punk to frame these songs. This project hearkens back to an era when "punk pop" was an oxymoron; when punk was a tool of anarchist malcontents intent on tearing down the facade of society. It's apparent from the songs his "Manifesto" advocates making a "Clean Break" and forming a "Separate State"—in a spiritual sense—to become a "Creator's Creation."

It's not quite religious anarchy. More like spiritual revolution: a tearing down of the old and building up of a new creation.

—Brad Caviness

REFLESCENT TIDE

Spring Catalog

Rugged

Reflescent Tide's sophomore release, *Spring Catalog,* is a little hard to categorize. With compelling, uncluttered, at times simplistic bass lines, thundering, minor-key guitar crashes, and guttural vocals sung with intense passion, you might be tempted to label it "metal." But then there are those playful vocal turns that lighten up the whole attitude of the song. Maybe it's more like Hootie and the Blowfish jamming with Metallica. But as soon as you settle into that classification, the 'Tide settles into a mellow acoustic set, or launches into a more futuristic cut, reminiscent of Fold Zandura. Like the Wisconsin weather, if you don't like the style, wait a minute; it'll change.

Jeff Weiss, the band's primary songwriter (he wrote or co-wrote all 12 cuts) continues to show growth as a lyricist, drawing on such diverse influences as Rich Mullins, C.S. Lewis and novelist Robert Jordan. On *Spring Catalog* he explores the dichotomy of faith in an

unseen God, of wrestling with the here-and-now while longing for the hereafter, of at once seeking truth while fearing its implications.

In "Avendesora" (a reference to the tree of life in Jordan's *Wheel Of Time* series) Weiss sings, *I sat beneath the tree/ That only had one leaf/ Some call it the tree of life/ While I just hide my shame.* In "Butterfly Wings" he writes, *Sometimes I have it all figured out/ and sometimes I'm lost in this mess/ sometimes I crawl on caterpillar legs/ But this time I'm soaring on butterfly wings.*

Dark and moody, *Spring Catalog* is great music for stormy weather, if you happen to have a crackling fire and a hot cup of spiced cider to keep you company.

—Mike Parker

PEP SQUAD

No Doy

BEC

Pep Squad's BEC debut *No Doy* is an interesting mixture of breathy vocals and noisy feedback-laden guitars held together in a pop song format. In fact, *No Doy* is practically a tribute to such indie rock legends as Sonic Youth and Superchunk.

For the most part, Pep Squad wants to play things off-kilter. Though the record starts off with the brooding "Angel," they quickly get into the indie power pop that comprises much of the record. Employing "ba-ba-bahs" (reminiscent of The Beatles and Beach Boys), crunchy guitars and bottom-heavy thumping basslines, the songs move. Pep Squad seeks to cram as much as possible into their songs without sounding rushed. "Jamie's Kisses" is a treasure that rocks out, yet is melodic enough to leave you

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singing it hours after a listen. "Bug-Nug" is a great tune that plays a nice tension game. The song goes from a nice jangly guitar melody to an all-out rock chorus.

The vocals are the strongest when Brian's (no last names for the Pep Squad) voice cracks (he's nearly yelling) and Kim sings backing vocals. On "Soopertrooper," Brian and Kim trade vocals back and forth which is a unique dynamic not seen much in music today. Pep Squad lays down simple but solid rhythms with guitars playfully going between odd feedback and jangling to

hard crunchy riffs.

Lyrically, Pep Squad is obscure, if not downright silly. It is hard to know what exactly they are singing about. Many songs deal with girls, detachment, longing and love. Fairly standard themes for a rock 'n' roll band, but they mess it up with obscure metaphors (like in "Jamie's Kisses": *Jamie's kisses are like candy canes on Christmas/ Jamie's kisses are red and white and twisted*).

No Day is a promising, if somewhat plain, tip into indie rock. A nice effort for a debut, but the members of Pep Squad tend to rely on their heroes a bit much, rather than finding their own voice.

—Chris M. Short

ONEMAN
OneMan
Absolute

Some artists form an independent label to put out their own music. Former guitarist for the artist formally known as Prince and A & R vice president for Star Song Dez Dickerson began his own company, Absolute—but not to produce his own material. Until now. After releasing projects from four other artists, Dickerson feels it's time to share his guitar-driven pop rock and message. *OneMan* is akin to Dogs of Peace and PFR (without the humor). His vocals mesh sounds from the lead singer of Blessid Union of Souls with the lead singer of Skillet. Surprisingly, the sound is a nice blend. Dickerson wrote most of the material as well as played and sang back-up vocals (which sometimes lean toward a British sound). The opener, "Hello Again," will make you think you're listening to John Elefante's "Hello, My Good Friend." The laid-back, aching feel of "Maybe Tonite," about getting over past hurt, precedes the contrasting "Peacehopejoy," which ups the rock factor with heavier guitars. "OneMan" features backup vocalists Joel and Jade Hanson (Joel is the ex-lead singer for PFR, hence the song's PFR feel). "This Song," "Like a Merry-Go-Round," "Home" and "The Way I Feel" stick to the same lyrical theme (articulated by Dickerson audibly in the hidden track) that there is hope

through "one man," Jesus Christ, no matter the situation. The music on *OneMan* is drawn from various influences, making Dickerson's solo album a complement to a pop/rock CD collection without stretching its boundaries.

—Cara Baker

90 LB. WUSS
Where the Meager Die of Self-Interest
Tooth & Nail

90 Lb. Wuss stormed on the scene last year with a record of old-fashioned, hardcore punk rock. Sort of a 1990's Dead Kennedys mixed with The Crucified. The record was characterized by equal parts fun, seriousness, life experience, and Christ-centered lyrics.

Now, it's 1998 and 90 Lb. Wuss has grown up some. *Where the Meager Die of Self-Interest* takes the band in another direction in a furious manner.

The Wuss' sophomore release is decidedly harder, sloppy, and extremely dark. The music stays true to the basic tenets of mid-'80s hardcore punk but with a ferocious intensity. The vocalist simply screams the lyrics at the top of his lungs. At points he sounds downright scary, like he's being tortured.

The lyrics take on a much darker tone than last year's debut. On "The Dawning of This Night Divine," he screams, *Let's just pretend/ I never meant to hurt you/ Wish I never felt this way.* And on and on and on goes the record. Song after song is characterized by dark feelings and regret.

The Wuss has not bothered to play its music any cleaner, either. Sloppy as only hardcore punk can be, they teeter on sounding out of sync. Spots of the record contain bizarre drum fills and rolls that sound missed. Other times the bass is driving so fast, it seems to take off without the band. The guitarist's work is best when he's playing fast and stop-stutter riffs—when he attempts to be "creative," it sounds forced (especially evident on "Queen Maggot").

But the Wuss excels when playing hardcore punk. "Senseless Accusations" and "Heresy" are exactly that—good hardcore punk songs (like on the debut). 90 Lb. Wuss may be attempting to move away from hardcore punk on *Where the Meager Die From Self-Interest*, and into noisecore. Whatever the case, they are intense (vocally and lyrically), loud, messy, and wouldn't have it any other way.

—Chris M. Short

SEND THE BEGGAR
Send the Beggar
Rustproof

Send the Beggar is made up of five guys who played in a youth group praise and worship band in Columbus, OH. Talent-wise, these guys have everything it takes to make it big ... *really* big! Musically, the disc features sterling guitar work by Chris Freeman and Cris Anthony, backed by steady rhythm players Matthew Wootton (bass) and Brett Fitzer (drums). Matt Bentley handles the vocals. Everyone contributes to the words and music, but the lion's share of credits belongs to Mr. Freeman.

It would be wrong to label the efforts of the band as ground-breaking. That shouldn't denigrate the considerable accomplishment this disc represents. Imagine taking elements of Sting, U2, Jars of Clay and Toad the Wet Sprocket, and distilling that potent mixture down into something called Send the Beggar.

That's not to say everything the boys touch is golden. Bentley's vocal musings could stand to be reigned in a little. And if he's got any grit in that liquid voice, he should use it next time out. Some of these songs simply scream for a raspy-throated singer!

Lyrically, there are times when the band's reach exceeds its grasp. Take this snippet of lyric from "Tangled with the Error": *All my doubting and needing are dependent on Your bleeding.* It's an awkward phrasing at best. The disc offers several gems, chief among these the poignant reading Bentley and guest vocalist Christine Glass give Freeman's "Prodigal." It's a simple song, beautifully written and performed. "Tuesday Afternoon" aches with the loss of love due to higher callings, and the lyrics to "Rome is Sinking" are pure poetry.

Here's hoping the next time around Freeman steps up to the task of doing all the writing (it's a band—but learn to play to your strength, boys). He's a major talent in the making. Those who listen to *Send the Beggar* will soon be begging for more.

—Jay Winchester

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VARIOUS ARTISTS

4th Anniversary Tooth & Nail Box Set

Tooth & Nail

To coin a much used but nevertheless appropriate phrase, the Christian music subculture breaks down into two kinds of people: those who love Tooth & Nail Records and those who hate them. Those in the former category praise the label for its ability to thrive outside of the Christian market, routinely landing their artists airplay on MTV and college radio. Ironically, those who malign the label usually do so for the same reasons, accusing them of being dodgy when it comes to issues of faith and perplexed by the label's willingness to be accepted in what some perceive as a "godless" arena.

The bottom line is this: Those who fall into the first category will adore the comprehensive five-disc *Tooth & Nail Box Set*, and those who fall into the second would have to be heartless to not, at the very least, admire the label for its tenacity and perseverance. An 80-page full-color booklet details the label's rise from meager beginnings in Brandon Ebel's apartment, to the semi-lucrative conglomerate it is now.

Co-founder Bill Power's meticulous and insightful notes read like a sort of Steinbeckian punk rock American dream, with Ebel going from "eating 2 bean, rice and cheese burritos a day" to creating subdivisions of the label to create some sort of classification system for its multitude of musicians. The layout and artwork in the booklet is fabulous, including covers from each of Tooth & Nail's 99 releases (the box set is the 100th), as well as band snapshots and early promotional ads and flyers.

The music itself is just as comprehensive. One song from each of Tooth & Nail's releases are included, as well as a handful of out-of-print tracks and rarities. The discs are designed to be skipped around, not played from start to finish.

The set reflects the label's dedication to hardcore and punk. More than half of the 100 tracks fall somewhere within those two categories, with the remainder being rounded out by indie rock (Joe Christmas, Delta Haymax, Pedro the Lion, Sal Paradise, Danielson), dream-pop (Starflyer 59, Morella's Forest), and just plain "rock" (Sometime Sunday, Plankeye, Mike Knott).

Listeners can discover what all the bands on the label sound like, perhaps uncovering a new favorite in the process. The downside is that choosier listeners may find only a handful of songs they truly enjoy; having to program each disc to skip certain tracks can be something of a hassle. Those with narrower tastes (who already own many of the records) would do best to steer clear, as they likely have already heard the only songs they'd be interested in.

For serious music afficionados, the box gives the opportunity to trace the development of certain bands. By cueing up certain tracks, the listener can hear Starflyer 59 gradually refine their sound over each release, and can listen to the Crucified evolve and mellow into Stavesacre.

Some of the choices are a bit atypical (like selecting "Today is My Way" over "Chick Magnet" from MxPx's *Life in General*, or not including Joy Electric's version of "Drum Machine Joy"), but these choices also shed light on some songs that may not have been recognized otherwise (like Stavesacre's electrifying "Tranewreck" and Pedro the Lion's deeply moving "Whole"). The box also scores high on the "stay up late" scale, as the urge to endlessly jump from band to band is nearly irresistible.

It's oddly inspiring when one pauses to consider that this compilation is largely the result of vision and hard work. There is something to be said for the fact that a man with a dream could build a label that would get nods of approval from the same pundits who usually slam music made by Christians. It's difficult to dodge the label's similar effect on the Christian market, a market that, when Tooth & Nail was formed, had few labels supporting alternative Christian music (only Brainstorm, Alarma and Blonde Vinyl come to mind).

The label's critics can gripe all they want, but after even the most cursory of listens to *The 4th Anniversary Box Set*, one thing is clear: Tooth & Nail Records has changed the Christian music industry while making substantial strides in the general market. They have done so by encouraging artists to make respectable music that expresses their feelings honestly, be they words of straightforward praise (The Supertones, Plankeye, Danielson Famile), or words of jaded woe (Joe Christmas, Delta Haymax, Frodus). That's hardly a thing to complain about.

—J. Edward Keyes

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Threshold

Author: Bill Myers

From the realms of science, the paranormal and Bible prophecy emerges a novel for our times: *Threshold* is fast-paced, carefully researched and includes warnings you can't ignore. "Good storytelling should stir up the audience, wake us from our complacency, and get us to think," says writer/director Bill Myers.

Myers is the bestselling author of *Blood of Heaven, McGee and Me!, The Incredible World of Wally McDoogle, Forbidden Doors, Christ B.C.,* and *Journeys to Fayran.* His books and videos have won more than 40 national and international awards and sold more than 3 million copies.

"Researching *Threshold* was an eye opener. As I interviewed some of the top psychic researchers in the world I was able to see scientific proof of the supernatural as well as the clear existence of the occult," Myers says.

Threshold follows Brandon Martus, a troubled, James Dean-type, who discovers through frightening supernatural intrusions he is destined to be one of the two end time prophets described in the book of Revelation.

First come the dreams and apocalyptic images he cannot control. Sometimes good, sometimes evil, they propel him into a "super reality" that forces him to witness people and circumstances as they are, not as they appear. With such insight come the apparitions—angelic and demonic, as Heaven and Hell battle for his control. His gifts soon draw the interest of a psychic research institute who, for their own dubious purposes, drive him deeper and deeper into his experiences.

Myers' research was extensive, including an interview with the man who headed up the CIA psychic research program for 20 years. "His stories of Russian and U.S. research were encouraging and chilling: encouraging in that they clearly prove the existence of the supernatural; chilling in that these dedicated scientists often deal with the occult without even knowing it."

But, according to Myers, there's a good side to the supernatural as well. "My favorite character is Gerty, an old prophetess who has been praying and fasting for Brandon since before he was born. The spiritual warfare she exercises in *Threshold* came through my own experiences nearly 20 years ago when singer Keith Green and I helped deliver one of the top West Coast psychics from extreme demonic activity. Then, there are all those overseas mission films I've directed," Myers says. "The supernatural warfare some of these missionaries encounter would make books by themselves."

Myers says the most exciting part of his research was spending a day with "Son of Sam" killer David Berkowitz. "Here was a serial killer who shot 13 people and was totally immersed in the occult. Yet, through the power of Jesus Christ he was able to break through the bonds of darkness, seek forgiveness, and be totally free. Now that's power. Power that makes all of the occult experiences seem like child's play."

—Tony Cummings

"As I interviewed some of the top psychic researchers in the world I was able to see scientific proof of the supernatural as well as the clear existence of the occult."

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Little Tree (Sub-Lime)
12 THE SUPERTONES
Resolution (BEC)
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14 HOKUS PICK
I'm So Happy (Freedom)
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Strange Rain (Tattoo)

R&B

1 GINA
Mind, Body and Soul
(N-Soul)
2 GOSPEL HOUSING
AUTHORITY
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3 WORLD WIDE MESSAGE
TRIBE Reach for Heaven
(Warner Alliance)
4 SOZO
Color of Grace (N-Soul)
5 GOD'S PROPERTY
Stomp (B-Rite)
6 UNITY KLAN
Jesus Is In The House
(Rescue)
7 JOY ELECTRIC
Monosynth (BEC)
8 NITRO PRAISE 4
Awesome God (N-Soul)
9 T-BONE
Demon Executor
(Metro One)
10 TAMMY TRENT
It's All About You (Light)

Rap

1 NAKED
Don't Blame Me (Rugged)
2 DISCIPLE
My Daddy Can Whip Your
Daddy (Warner Resound)
3 SPOKEN
On Your Feet (Metro One)
4 LIVING SACRIFICE
Reject (Tooth & Nail)
5 EVERY DAY LIFE
Pushing (Alarma)
6 CRASHDOG
Proclamation (Grrr)
7 TOURNIQUET
Crawl to China (Diadem)
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Tooth & Nail RECORDS

blah, blah, blah

by Frank Chimento

One night in St. Cloud, Fla., when I was 18, I was standing in the parking lot of a new church, deeply engaged in a conversation with a friend. I had just given my life to Jesus, completely and unconditionally. That, in itself, is fantastic. But, having been to church my entire life, it's pretty sad that it took me that long.

I wondered, *Why did it take so long for the Gospel to become real to me?* After all, I loved a challenge and I had a better understanding of Christianity and the Bible than many adults. But I didn't like church and I didn't like youth group. They bored me. I don't mean there weren't enough bells and whistles. I guess I just didn't get it. The message just never seemed relevant to me.

Four years ago, when I moved from Orlando to Nashville to work in Christian music, I had the desire to somehow be involved in communicating to people like me that the Gospel is relevant. I started by selling advertising for a publishing company. As one thing led to another, about three years ago, we came up with the idea for *7ball* magazine.

It was like pulling teeth to get some people to believe in the concept—a relevant Christian publication for young people. You wouldn't believe the opposition we faced. An edgy Christian music magazine for teenagers? How will it pay the bills?

But, we kept pushing because we knew there were others who would identify with us. Finally, *7ball* launched with a bang at Cornerstone '95, and it's been a wild ride ever since.

I'm thankful and humbled that, in spite of my weaknesses, God has allowed me to be part of His work of reaching people. Performing God's will is an awesome feeling, and I thank Jesus for constantly showing me that He has a purpose for me.

I say all of this to announce that this is my last issue as associate publisher for *7ball*. After prayer and thought and constant nail-biting, I've decided to shift my efforts toward working more closely with bands and record labels to help make the presentation of the Gospel more relevant.

Of course, I'll still be around here, too. I'll continue to write for *7ball* from time to time (I love the free trips) and give Chris way more than my two-cents worth.

As I move on to other challenges, I'm reminded of Jeremiah 29:11: *For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.* (NLT)

That's for me. It's for you, too. That's the Good News. No matter the obstacles in your life, live for Jesus. I challenge you to be bold, follow Christ unconditionally, serve everyone, and SUBSCRIBE TO 7BALL! Thanks for the support—we couldn't have gotten this far without all of you and God's tremendous grace. I don't have anything artsy or poetic to leave you with. We at *7ball* just try to be normal people who understand and appreciate the power of a living God. And we like cool things.

I've had a blast. It's been great. I'm sad to leave the day-to-day operations of *7ball*, but I'm also excited about the future. The staff at *7ball* will continue to give you the best magazine in Christian music.

See ya at the festivals this summer!

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3. Tim Taber
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4. Joy Electric
"Monosynth" (BEC)

5. Dale Thompson & The Kentucky Cadillacs
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6. The Dingees
"Bulletproof" (BEC)

7. Reflescent Tide
"Leaving" (Rugged)

8. Pep Squad
"Angel" (BEC)

9. Lloyd
"Vapor" (Organic)

10. The Electrics
"Get to Heaven" (SaraBellum)

11. Send The Beggar
"Matter" (Rustproof)

12. Druve
"Thrifty Mr. Rockstar" (SaraBellum)

13. Cloud2Ground
"Face 2 Face" (N•Soul)

SOMEBODY SIGN THESE GUYS.

14. Outsiders
"Everybody Get On Down"
(unsigned)

15. Waterdeep
"I Know the Plans" (unsigned)

7BALL GAS COLLECTION 6

Gas collection 6

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1. Big Tent Revival
"Rivalry" 3:59

2. Bon Voyage
"Honeymoon" 3:21

3. Tim Taber
"God of Mine" 4:08

4. Joy Electric
"Monosynth" 3:18

5. Dale Thompson &
The Kentucky Cadillacs
"The Road Less Traveled" 4:35

6. The Dingees
"Bulletproof" 2:48

7. Reflescent Tide
"Leaving" 3:19

8. Pep Squad
"Angel" 3:43

9. Lloyd
"Vapor" 4:41

10. The Electrics
"Get to Heaven" 2:41

11. Send The Beggar
"Matter" 4:30

12. Oryve
"Thrifty Mr. Kickstar" 6:26

13. Cloud2Ground
"Face 2 Face" 7:10

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14. Outsiders
"Everybody Get
On Down" 4:19

15. Waterdeep
"I Know the Plans" 4:28

GAS COLLECTION 6

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